■ BUSINESS / B1

Domestic air travel rises by 20% this holiday season

■ METRO / A15

MMDA to appeal SC ruling stripping it of police powers

■ NEWS / A2

Prospects bleak for peace talks between gov't, NDF

■ ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1

PDI man in Hollywood reveals most fascinating interviews of 2005

Petition in cyberspace: Abalos et al. resign now

By Jerome Aning

NOW SHOWING IN CYBERSPACE: A PETITION for the resignation of all officials led by Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos of the Commission on Elections allegedly involved in the P1.3-billion poll body modernization program deemed anomalous by the Supreme Court.

PETITION/ A7

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

PNP: Don't fire guns; Pacheco: Get rid of guns

By Luige A. del Puerto

"GUNLESS SOCIETY" ADvocate Reynaldo Pacheco finds it ironic that police in this predominantly Roman Catholic country have to remind its citizens

PNP/ A5

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Wednesday, December 28, 2005 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 20 P18
website: www.inq7.net

4 GIs charged with rape

IT IS MOST DIFFICULT to put down in words all the feelings, the memories, the hopes that make the Christmas season Christmas. So, let fireworks say it all. The four-day World Pyrolympics from Dec. 26 to 30 over Manila Bay is a dazzling expression of all the indescribable emotional high in this season of unceasing wonders. On Monday, China and Australia, two of the nine countries participating in the most intense and biggest fireworks competition, display their fireworks styles. Above, an explosion of mirth from Down Under. AP

Prosecutor demands custody of accused

By Tonette Orejas and Ansbert Joaquin
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—The case of the alleged rape of a 22-year-old Filipino woman by US Marines at the Subic Bay Freeport is now in court.

Olongapo Prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni and Assistant Prosecutor Raymond Viray yesterday filed rape charges against four of the original six American suspects and their Filipino driver, and demanded custody of the Americans and their detention in an Olongapo jail.

The four Americans are the first foreign soldiers to be charged with rape since the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was implemented in 1999 to allow military exercises between the Philippines and the United States.

But in Manila, Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the VFA, has all but given up on the Philippine government's efforts to gain custody of the soldiers.

The VFA allows the US government to keep custody of the accused "until the completion of the case," Paredes told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"Warrants of arrest can be issued, but they can't be served if the US invokes the VFA. They can be refused unless the US grants our request," he said.

"When there's a clash between a domestic procedural law and a treaty like the VFA, the treaty pre-

4 GIs CHARGED/ A6

GMA allies say fresh ouster moves doomed to fail

By Norman Bordadora, Michael Lim Ubac and Nikko Dizon

ADMINISTRATION ALLIES YESTERDAY said they expected President Macapagal-Arroyo to quash a fresh bid to oust her in the New Year but analysts ruled out military support of the opposition effort in spite of lingering doubts about the legitimacy of her presidency.

House Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin said Sen. Rodolfo Biazon's skepticism about the country's political stability and economic recovery gave away the opposition's political agenda next year to continue attempts to unseat the President."

"Unfortunately for them, they will fail in 2006 like they did this year when we saw anti-Arroyo forces desperately trying every possible means to oust her but falling flat on their faces," said Salapuddin. He insisted that Ms Arroyo would remain the President until 2010.

Retired Navy Commodore Rex Robles told the INQUIRER that the so-called rebels in the Armed Forces seemed to have withdrawn from active participation in the opposition moves to oust Ms Arroyo.

He said in a telephone interview from Malaysia that rebellious soldiers were studying a more rational approach to the political crisis.

Robles said the activities of the third generation of rebels in the active service—the Young Officers' Union New Generation, or Young—no longer seemed to suggest an aggressive campaign against their Commander in Chief.

GMA ALLIES/ A6

GMA stands as 'ninang' to close aide

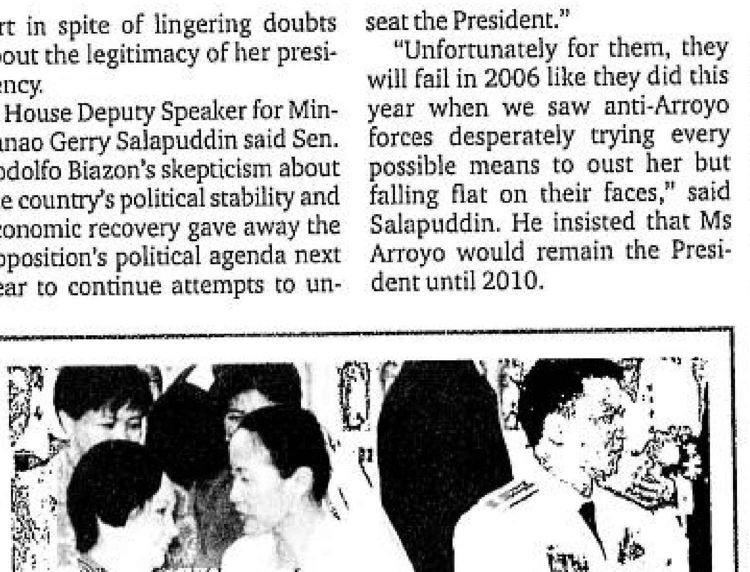
By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—CALL HER "Ninang" (godmother).

President Macapagal-Arroyo's annual Christmas holiday started on Monday afternoon, when she arrived in this mountain city with her family.

But holiday or not, the President had official business to at-

GMA STANDS/ A7



MALACAÑANG PHOTO

ROMANTIC interlude for Ms Arroyo who stands as sponsor to her aide Chief Insp. Sonia Cabantiles as she weds Chief Insp. Jonathan Calixto.

Owners to get P870M for Luisita, not P4B

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE COJUANGCOS ARE NOT likely to get P4.3 billion, the amount that they reportedly want from the government's acquisition of the nearly 5,000-ha Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac.

By the government's computation, the land owners are going to be paid only about P870 million.

An official of the Department of Agrarian Reform said the going rate for sugar estates covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program was P200,000 to P250,000 per hectare for the most productive lands.

This amount is much lower than the P1 million per hectare that Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) got for the 77 hectares it sold to the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) for the Subic-Clark Expressway.

"The valuation would be based on the production data, market value and assessed value, but on the average, sugar lands in the country go for around P200,000 per hectare," DAR Undersecretary for Operations Narciso Nieto said in an interview.

The Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) last week

OWNERS/ A7

Chinese firm pays tax to Red 'comrades'

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr. and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.

A COMPANY OWNED BY THE CHINESE GOVernment has not been spared from paying "revolutionary tax" to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), a former ally of the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal on Monday said it no longer mattered to the New People's Army (NPA), the CPP military arm, if the company being ordered to pay revolutionary tax was Chinese-owned or not.

"So what if it's Chinese-owned? What's the difference?" Rosal earlier said of the company. For the CPP, China, like Russia, is no longer considered communist but "revisionist" and "stinking capitalist."

"After the death of Comrade Mao, China has abandoned the communist cause and shamefully embraced capitalism," the CPP spokesperson said. "What they have now is a revisionist political party and a capitalist socioeconomic system."

Rosal described the Chinese company paying the revolutionary tax as a "road contractor."

Revolutionary taxes are fees imposed on businesses or economic activities in areas under the control and influence of the NPA, ac-

CHINESE/ A4

A KRISTINA E CASSION/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

WOMEN HOLD UP HALF OF THE SKY: During the rites observing the 37th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines, women fighters are at the forefront.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2005

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers becoming widespread rains over Eastern Luzon which may trigger flash floods and landslides in these areas. The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY JAMIE ALARCON, PDI RESEARCH/12/28/05 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Reds: Prospects for talks bleak

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE PROSPECTS FOR THE RESUMPTION OF PEACE TALKS BETween the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) are as bleak as they were after the talks were suspended six months ago.

"*Malabo ngayon ang* peace talks (The chances for the peace talks look dim)," NDF spokesperson Luis Jalandoni told the INQUIRER in a recent interview in Hong Kong. "If they want, they should sit down on it and address the prejudicial questions on the terrorist billing."

Jalandoni was referring to the inclusion of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military wing, the New People's Army, on US and European lists of alleged terrorist organizations.

Other conditions for the resumption of peace talks identified by Jalandoni included the restoration of NDF negotiators' freedom of movement, release of political prisoners, compensation for human rights victims under the Marcos dictatorship and the activation of a joint ceasefire monitoring committee as provided for under a preliminary agreement between the two sides brokered by the Norwegian government.

Government and NDFP panels signed two agreements during the formal peace negotiations in Oslo, Norway last year.

The agreements called for joint or separate initiatives of the Philippine government and the NDF to ask the US, EU and "all concerned foreign states" to remove the terrorist listing of the CPP-NPA and NDF chair Jose Ma. Sison; the allocation of P8 billion in Marcos money for the indemnification of human rights victims; the review of the cases of some 300 political prisoners and the immediate release of at least 30 women and sick detainees; the operation of the Joint Monitoring Committee, and the undertaking of social and economic reforms to address the roots of the armed conflict.

Jalandoni said the Philippine government should at least speak out against the terrorist tag on the CPP-NPA because it was a form of US intervention on internal policies and conflicts.

The government and the NDF, the political arm of the communist rebels, started formal peace negotiations in 1986 to end one of the world's longest running insurgencies. Peace talks have been conducted on-and-off since then.

The NDF withdrew from the last round of peace talks in July at the height of the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal that shook the Arroyo administration. It said then that it would wait for the next administration.

The government responded by suspending the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and ordering the arrest of rebel leaders.

"The immunity guarantees should continue beyond the agreement," Jalandoni said.

By NDF count, there are 97 people—ten of them abroad—who had been issued safe conduct passes but are now subject to arrest.

Jalandoni said even members of the Joint Monitoring Committee, which was created last year to handle cases of human rights abuses filed against both parties to the peace talks, could now be arrested.

The monitoring committee has been inactive for almost a year now because the government has allegedly refused to allow its representatives to meet with the NDF representatives, according to Jalandoni.

Meanwhile, self-exiled CPP founder Sison assailed the Arroyo administration for its alleged neglect of overseas Filipino workers despite their billion-peso remittances that help prop up the country's economy.

"The reactionary government condones and encourages the most exploitative terms of employment. It allows the most humiliating and even deadly abuses practiced by foreign governments and employers against migrant workers," Sison said in a message yesterday to the 4th Congress of Migrante International, a global alliance of overseas Filipino organizations. *With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Rains, floods ahead for some regions

THE COUNTRY CAN EXPECT THE PAST weekend's dreary Christmas weather to continue as a combination of an active low pressure area and the tail end of a cold front are predicted to bring heavy rains and even flash floods and landslides to certain regions.

Because of the cold front, eastern Luzon will experience heavy rains which could trigger flash floods and landslides, particularly in the Cagayan Valley and the Bicol region, the Pagasa weather bureau said yesterday.

At the same time, an active low pressure area has been spotted north of Palawan and would bring heavy rains to the island province though it has not shown any signs of getting stronger, Pagasa said.

The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with rain showers and isolated thunderstorms, it said.

"Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rain showers becoming widespread rains over eastern Luzon which may trigger flash floods and landslides along these areas," the Pagasa weather bulletin said.

Still, Pagasa weather branch chief Nathaniel Cruz said weather conditions all over the country are expected to improve in the next few days as the cold front dissipates and its effects are diminished.

As for the low pressure area near Palawan, Cruz said it was expected to move west to the South China Sea in the next 24 to 48 hours.

The active low pressure area spotted near northern Mindanao on Dec. 26 has already dissipated, he added.

"There will be improved weather conditions in the next several days but by that we don't mean that the sun would be shining (brightly). There'd still be cloudy skies but there would be less rains," he said.

The seaboards of Luzon will see moderate to rough seas for the next 24 hours because of the moderate to strong winds from the low pressure area, Pagasa said.

Metro Manila is expected to have mostly cloudy skies with rain showers and Manila Bay will be moderate to rough.

Coastal waters are expected to be moderate to rough in the Bicol region.

Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate blowing from the east and southeast with slight to moderate seas. *Norman Bordadora*

Special Lakas meet to tackle No-el

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE RULING LAKAS-CHRISTIAN Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD), will hold a special meeting before Congress reopens next month to come up with a common stand on Charter change, including the "no election" provision that is driving a wedge between key allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio downplayed speculation that the proposal by the 55-member Constitutional Commission to scrap the 2007 elections and give a three-year extension to incumbents to make way for parliamentary elections in 2010 would divide the country's most powerful political party.

"We're confident the No-el issue will not divide the party. Lakas has a built-in and time-tested mechanism for consultations and arriving at a consensus on even the most contentious issues," said Claudio in a phone interview.

That mechanism will surely be pushed to the limit after the party's honorary chair, former President Fidel V. Ramos, called it No-el a "monumental blunder" and Speaker Jose de Venecia scoffed at the thought of lawmakers benefiting from their own action. Both have called on the President to step down in 2007 as a graceful exit from her political troubles and to pave the way for parliamentary elections.

But a Lakas-CMD faction loyal to the President lambasted Ramos' ultimatum for Malacañang to declare its intentions by New Year's Day on the No-el scenario or else the former military general would withdraw his support from her administration.

The special Lakas-CMD meeting will be held on Jan. 17.

Claudio reiterated that despite Ramos' demand, the President would keep to herself her personal stand on the no-election issue preferring that Congress and the public decide on the matter.

Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay, who had threatened to make a run at the House speakership early this year, said Ramos had no business "threatening the President."

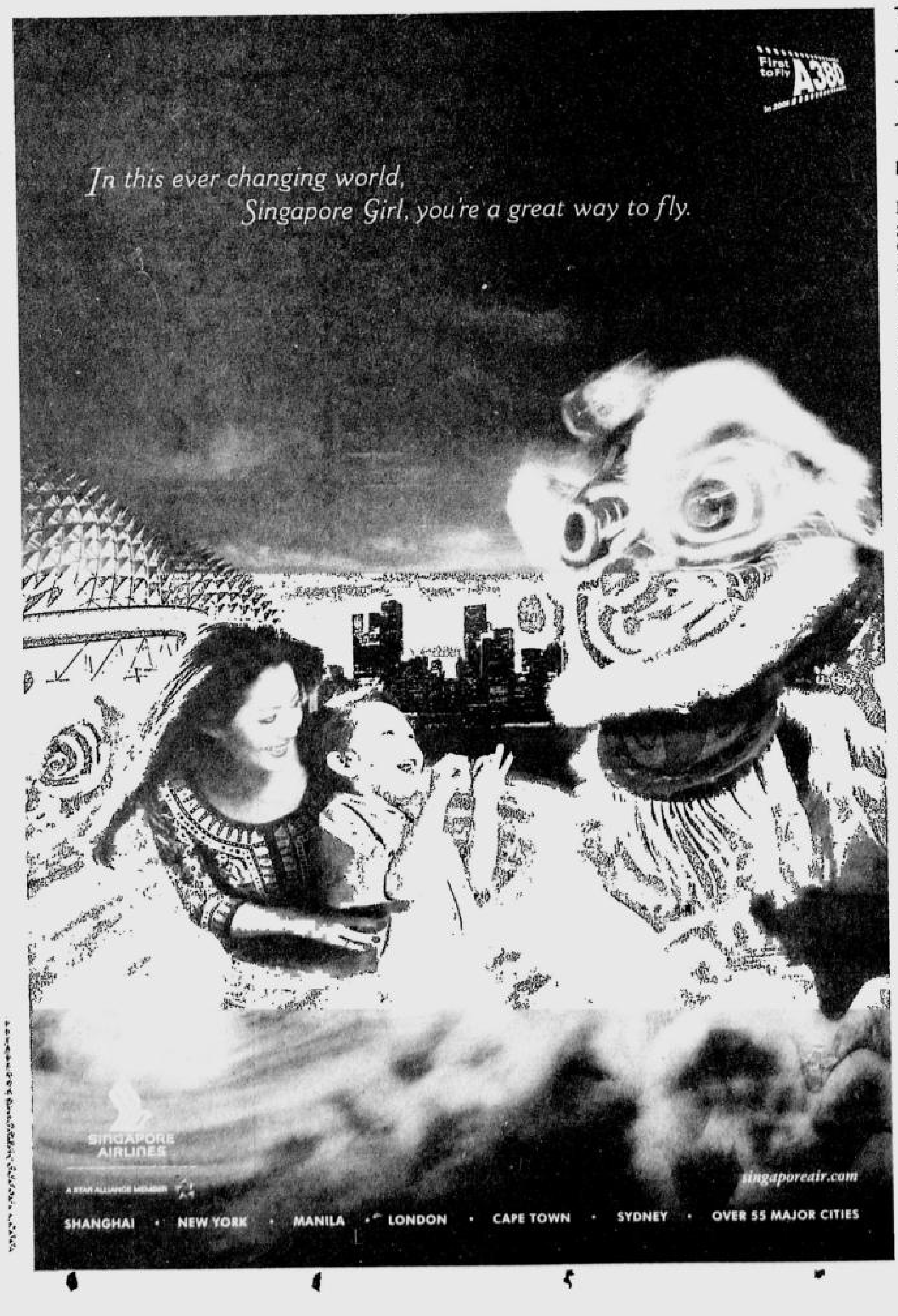
A Malacañang official, who refused to be identified for fear of alienating the President's allies, confirmed the widening rift between the Ramos and the President's factions in Lakas-CMD.

"Butch Pichay is flapping his wings just to keep De Venecia in the line of the administration. But JDV should not take Pichay's threat lightly. Between him and Butch, the latter has more access to the President," the source said.

But Claudio said the word war between the Lakas-CMD stalwarts was just part of a healthy debate in the party.

Claudio said top officials of Lakas-CMD have held discussion in recent days to convince the warring parties not to be "sidetracked by the No-el issue."

"The main message and objective behind Charter change are political and structural such as the shift to a parliamentary system. No-el is just a proposal of ConCom to perhaps provide a smooth transition. It has yet to be considered by Congress, which had always been the intended end-users of the ConCom recommendations," Claudio said.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Bounty urged on escaped Magdalo leader's head

By Philip C. Tubeza and Dona Pazzibugan

LAWMAKERS YESTERDAY URGED THE government to put up a bounty for escaped Oakwood mutineer Capt. Nicanor Faeldon and stop him from using the Internet to wage a campaign of civil disobedience.

But while declaring that it was doing all it could to locate the fugitive Marine officer, the military at the same time said it did not know how it could curb a man's right to express himself.

The hits or number of visitors to the website used by Faeldon to call for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo have increased following media reports about its existence.

As of yesterday afternoon, the site had been viewed by more than 7,900 visitors.

Representatives Isidoro Real (Lakas, Zamboanga del Sur) and Eduardo Veloso (NPC, Leyte) called on the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to redouble their efforts to arrest Faeldon, who escaped from military custody on Dec. 14.

Real and Veloso, in a statement, said that while Faeldon was not a security threat to the government, he should be arrested for his "continuing crime of rebellion."

They called on the government to put up a reward for Faeldon's capture but recommended no specific amount.

"Putting up a reward will contribute to his arrest," Real said.

Real denounced Faeldon's "shenanigans in cyberspace," referring to the officer's statement on the website—pilipino.org.ph—calling on the public to force Ms Arroyo out of office through civil disobedience.

The authorities should do all they can to prevent Faeldon from using the net in waging a smear campaign against Ms Arroyo and the government, Real said.

"Faeldon has managed to taunt our government under our very noses," he added.

Veloso said: "He should now be treated as a common outlaw, to serve as an example to others in the military who may have an adventurist and megalomaniac streak."

Faeldon was one of the leaders of the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny, when some 300 soldiers took over the Oakwood Premier hotel in Makati.

Faeldon has eluded a nationwide manhunt.

"We're still trying to locate him," Armed Forces spokesperson Col. Tristan Kison said.

Asked if the military would shut down the website, Kison said: "No, this is a democracy. I don't know how we can restrain freedom of expression. I hope we can do something about it."

But Kison added that Faeldon committed another offense on top of mutiny.

"This could even be inciting to sedition," Kison said of the website statements.

Faeldon's website showed a Philippine flag in half-mast to signify a "country in mourning." *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

Memorial park burial for Barbers

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE SEN. ROBERT Z. Barbers has decided to bury him, as originally planned, in the family mausoleum at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City.

This was the consensus reached by members of the family during a conference yesterday after President Macapagal-Arroyo offered a burial site at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

"We want to be close to him so we decided to bury him at the family mausoleum. My mom's father and brothers are buried there," Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, the late senator's son, said in a phone interview after emerging from the family conference.

Most members of the Barbers clan are buried at the family mausoleum.

"Since we're a big family, we felt that the Manila Memorial Park could accommodate us more than Libingan when we get together," he added.

The President offered the Libingan as the final resting place for Barbers, one of her allies in Congress, when she paid her respects on Sunday night. The late senator is set to be buried on Wednesday next week.

Barbers, a former Surigao del Norte congressman and a bemedalled Manila police officer, was elected senator in 1998 and served until 2004. He died Sunday morning after suffering cardiac arrest at the age of 61. *TJ Burgonio*

THEY'RE MAD AT GMA, TOO
Various overseas Filipino groups under the umbrella of Migrante International are holding their triennial congress from Dec. 27 to 29 at the United Church of Christ in the Philippines' Shalom Center on Guerrero Street, Malate, Manila. Centerpiece of the congress is its "Oust Gloria" call, "given that [President] Gloria [Macapagal-Arroyo] and her anti-migrant policies are the common factor in the misery underlying our plight," according to Connie Bragas-Regalado, Migrante chair. REM ZAMORA

Private sector must help public education –DepEd

By Alcuin Papa

THE COUNTRY WILL FIND ITSELF with an education system still in crisis next year if the private sector does not help, the Department of Education (DepEd) said yesterday.

Like a family trying to make ends meet, the DepEd is making do with meager resources in an attempt to raise the standard of education in the country's public schools, said DepEd officer-in-charge Fe Hidalgo.

"We have said it time and again that Philippine education is in crisis. It's time that we enjoin not just DepEd officials around the country, but more importantly the entire nation, to act now to solve this crisis," Hidalgo said.

National priority

"In 2006, we are going to make education a national priority and with the help of the communities, we will really get things done in education," she said in a talk with reporters recently.

Hidalgo said the education department would intensify its campaign to solicit big business support for the improvement of the education system.

She said efforts would be strengthened to get local government units and the private sector to continue supporting public education.

She noted that without the help of the private sector and LGUs, the resource gaps in education would have been bigger.

Because of the perennially meager allocations given to education, the DepEd has over the years turned to the private sector and LGUs for funding assistance.

The DepEd had said that private sector assistance to public education amounted to around P1 billion in the form of materials and time spent improving classrooms in the past few years.

Bridging resource gaps

Hidalgo said the department has made some headway in reducing critical shortages in resources and would be focusing this year on bridging resource gaps through the proper use of data obtained from the field and from a review of management processes.

The department will also focus on raising student participation in schools and improving their results in achievement tests.

She added that the DepEd would focus on the proper use of its resources so it can build more classrooms, buy more textbooks and chairs and hire new public school teachers.

"This also means more innovative and creative approaches in teaching and learning. We will also provide every possible opportunity for teachers to develop professionally. With the active involvement of all stakeholders, we believe we can succeed," Hidalgo said.

In the last Educators' Congress in Davao City, Hidalgo exhorted education officials from the around the country to improve student performance in English, Science and Mathematics.

Teacher training

She said the bulk of next year's education budget would go to improvement in teacher training, the hiring of new teachers and scholarships to private schools for deserving public school students.

Earlier, Hidalgo decried that the proposed education budget of P119 billion for 2006 would not be enough to make any significant improvement in the standard of public education as this would just about cover cost increases from inflation.

She said the education department would need a budget of around P130 billion to cover the projected rise in enrollments in the 2006 school year and to significantly improve public education around the country.

The DepEd started this school year by managing to reduce the deficit in the number of classrooms by half, from 15,000 to around 8,600. But this was achieved mainly through such "creative interventions" as multi-shift classroom system and soliciting of support from the private sector and local communities.

Yap must explain issues, says Etta

AKBAYAN PARTY-LIST REP. ETTA Rosales has appealed to opposition and administration lawmakers not to be hasty in endorsing the appointment of Arthur Yap as presidential adviser for job creation.

Yap, the former secretary of the Department of Agriculture, has yet to explain certain issues and clear his name, Rosales said in an interview yesterday.

"Beyond the foiled and exposed Agusan project and beyond the dismissed tax case, Mr. Yap has to clarify allegations against him in the Senate Agricultural Committee report, [as well as] the unresolved allegations of rice smuggling and fertilizer fund scam—charges filed by the late Marilyn Esperat with the Ombudsman," Rosales said.

Administration Rep. Benasing Macarambon, Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, Deputy Majority Leader Fred Castro, Isabela Rep. Edwin Uy and Deputy Minority Leader Rolex Suplico all agreed that Yap deserved to be forgiven and given another chance to serve the Arroyo government following the dismissal of a tax case filed against him.

"All these criticisms are meant to block his appointment. Secretary Yap deserves to be part of government because of his proven competence, integrity and honesty," said Macarambon.

According to Suplico, it was "premature" to criticize the appointment of Yap, considered by critics a "suspect" based on a project that never materialized—the P8.9-billion Agusan Reserve Area Development Project.

"I know Atty. Yap as an honest and dedicated public servant. Let him work first and criticize him if he cannot deliver, based on his job description," Suplico said.

Uy said the Senate investigated the Agusan project but ended the probe after "finding no proof" that Yap was involved.

Castro said the investigation conducted by the Senate committee on agriculture headed by Sen. Ramon Magsaysay eventually showed that Yap was innocent of the charges.

However, Rosales noted that as early as 2003, Yap, who was then National Food Authority chief, had been implicated in a fertilizer scam amounting to about P450 million.

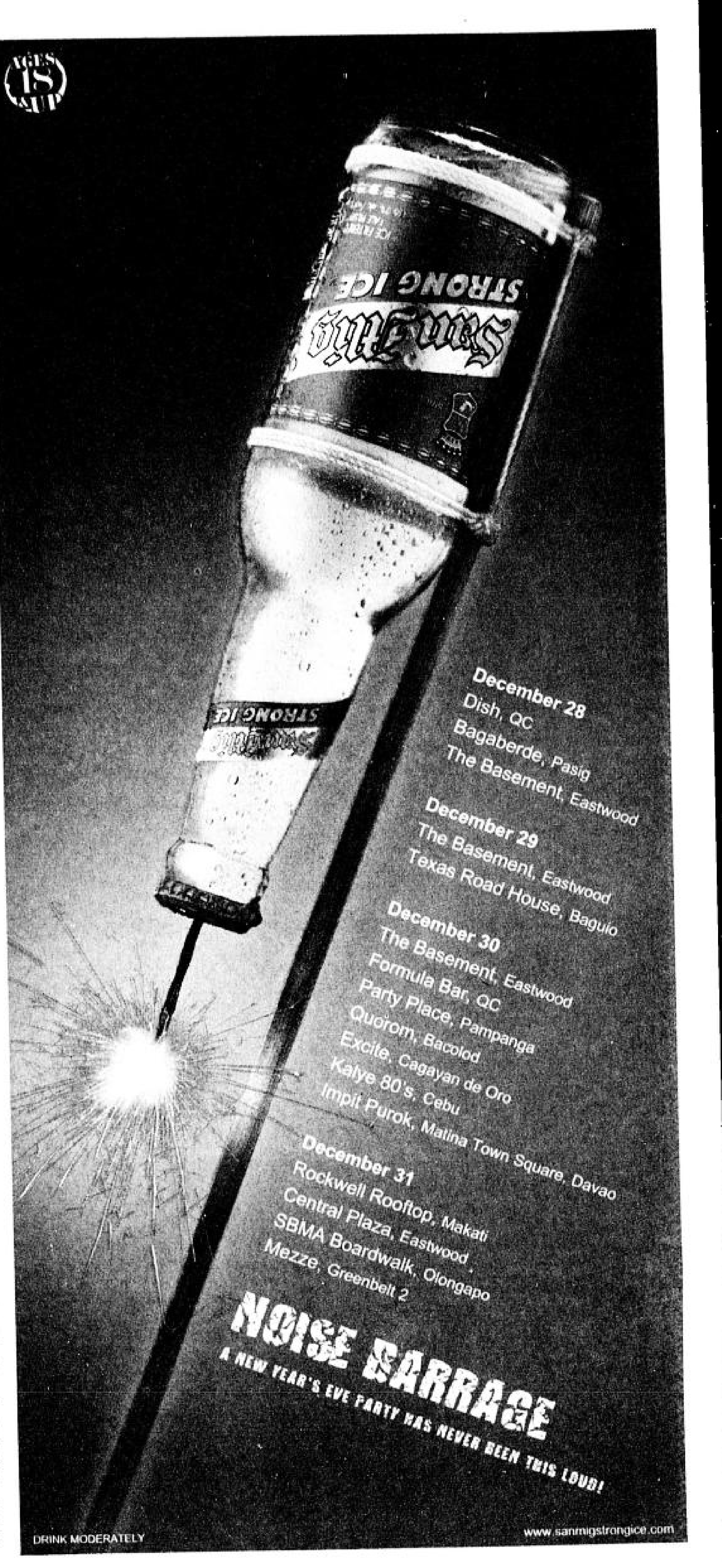
Yap wasn't the only one going through the wringer. Acting Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales was charged with technical smuggling by Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said he and Finance Secretary Margarito Teves double-checked the alleged smuggling charges against Morales but found no pending case against the former customs chief of the Batangas port.

"If there are no formal charges against him [Morales], nothing would prevent the President from exercising her prerogative to choose her officials," Ermita said.

Reyes filed a case against Morales and other Batangas port officials with Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito P. Gervacio, Jr. on March 2.

In his complaint, Reyes said: "We have strong reason to believe that the customs officials of the Port of Batangas are liable for possible violations of Republic Act No. 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act." *Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*



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Chinese firm pays tax to Red 'comrades'

From page A1

cording to Rosal. Businesses that will cause harm to a community are not allowed to operate in NPA areas, he said.

The Chinese company building roads in the country is the Beijing-based China Road & Bridge Corp. (China Road), whose heavy equipment had been torched by the NPA.

China Road describes itself on its website as a "leading state-owned company" that has concluded more than 500 contracts overseas valued at $6 billion over the past two decades.

Since 2001, China Road has been the contractor in six major road projects in four Philippine provinces—Negros Oriental, La Union, Leyte and Catanduanes—with a total project cost of P2.77 billion, according to the Department of Public Works and Highways.

An engineer of China Road said the company had also built a flyover in Manila.

Rosal recalled how representatives of the Chinese contractor had sought to meet with the NPA faction operating around its project site.

Comrades no more

"When the Chinese finally met the emissary of the Red fighters, they asked that they be exempted from the payment of revolutionary tax on grounds that they are also communists, that they are also comrades," Rosal said on the cell phone when first contacted in July.

"What did the Chinese hear in return? That they are no longer comrades, and they also have to pay the revolutionary tax," Rosal said. "The Chinese eventually paid."

Assets of companies like cell phone service providers and bus firms that refuse to pay the revolutionary tax have been burned or bombed by the NPA.

The NPA torched the heavy equipment of China Road twice—on Jan. 20, 2004 in Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental, and on April 25, 2005 in San Andres, Catanduanes.

A third attack came on May 24. The NPA ambushed a team of soldiers and policemen accompanying an engineer hired by a subcontractor of China Road, Sun West Construction, to dynamite part of a mountain in San Miguel town. A soldier was wounded in the attack.

Work suspended

The attacks had prompted China Road to suspend construction work on the P577.8-million Dumaguete-Siaton-Basay Road, and the P952.56-million San Andres-Virac-Bato-Viga Road.

In a letter to the Philippine-Japan Highway Loan Project Management Office on April 26, China Road project manager Ye Cheng Yin announced the suspension of construction work on the 79.82-km Catanduanes Circumferential Road Improvement Project.

The project is funded by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

China Road later resumed construction work on both projects. The Negros Oriental project has been completed, while the Catanduanes project is still ongoing.

Asked about the NPA attacks, Niu Jitao, spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Manila, said: "No comment."

The office of China Road in the country also refused to give its side.

"No information can be given to the INQUIRER unless there is a go-signal from the head office in Beijing," said Roxanne Madgued, administrative officer and secretary to the chief of China Road's office on T.M. Kalaw Avenue in Ermita, Manila.

A public works engineer said the NPA had demanded a revolutionary tax equivalent to 3 percent of the contract cost of the road project.

Original demand: P80M

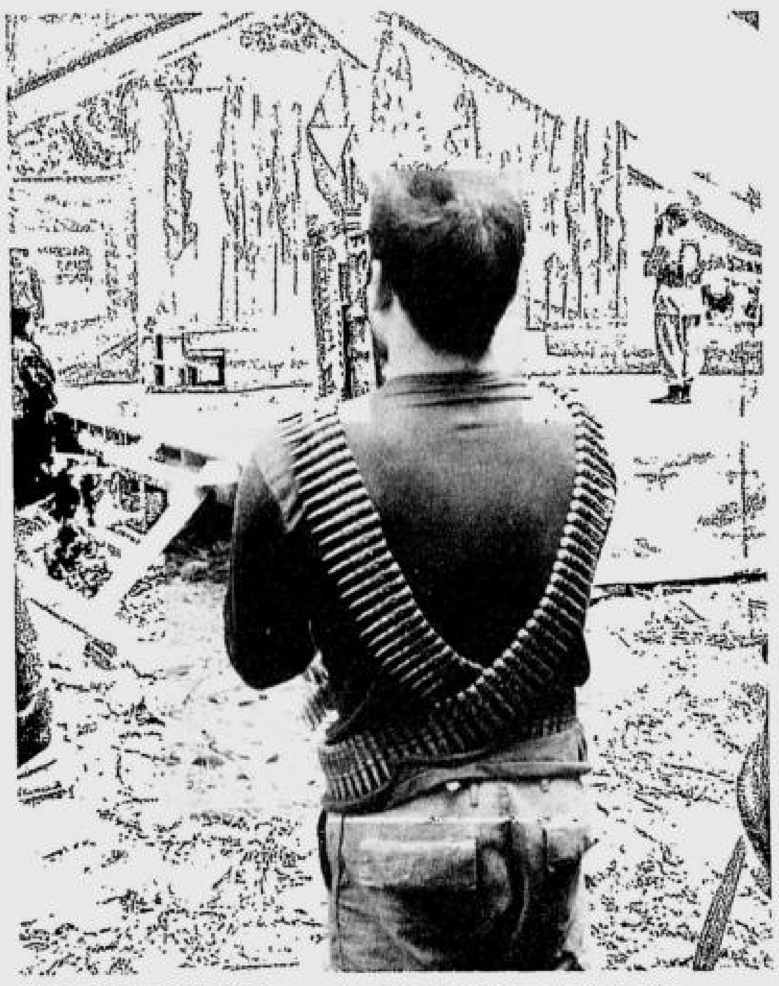
The NPA's Nerisa San Juan Command in Catanduanes had originally demanded P80 million for the whole project, according to an officer of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

"It was reduced to P30 million," said the officer based in the PNP provincial office at Camp Francisco Camacho in Virac, the capital town.

"Because China Road initially refused to pay, the NPA resorted to violent action," said the officer, who asked not to be named. He was referring to the burning of a dump truck, pay loader, grader and bulldozer of China Road in April.

Damage was placed at P1.2 million.

"Before leaving, the armed men reportedly threatened to commit similar incidents if their demands would not be met by the contractor," the Catanduanes Tribune said, citing a PNP report.



NPA FIGHTERS in Mindanao stand at attention as they sing the "Internationale" during the CPP's 37th founding anniversary in the hinterlands of Lianga, Surigao del Sur. MA. KRISTINA E. CASSION/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

Birds of same feather

The police officer said "one week after the Bislig [San Andres] incident, negotiations were conducted in Manila [between China Road and the NPA], where payment was done."

Months before the burning of its equipment, China Road expressed confidence that the NPA would exempt it from the revolutionary tax.

"We Chinese are communist. The NPA is also communist. We [are birds of the] same feather. So why do we have to give [money]?" said the police officer, quoting a Chinese engineer.

It was an empty boast.

Times have changed

The CPP central committee accused the Chinese government in May of withdrawing support for armed struggles in Southeast Asia "in exchange for China's accommodation by Washington into the world capitalist system."

It was a turnaround from the close ties between the CPP and the Chinese Communist Party, which sent arms to the NPA in the early '70s.

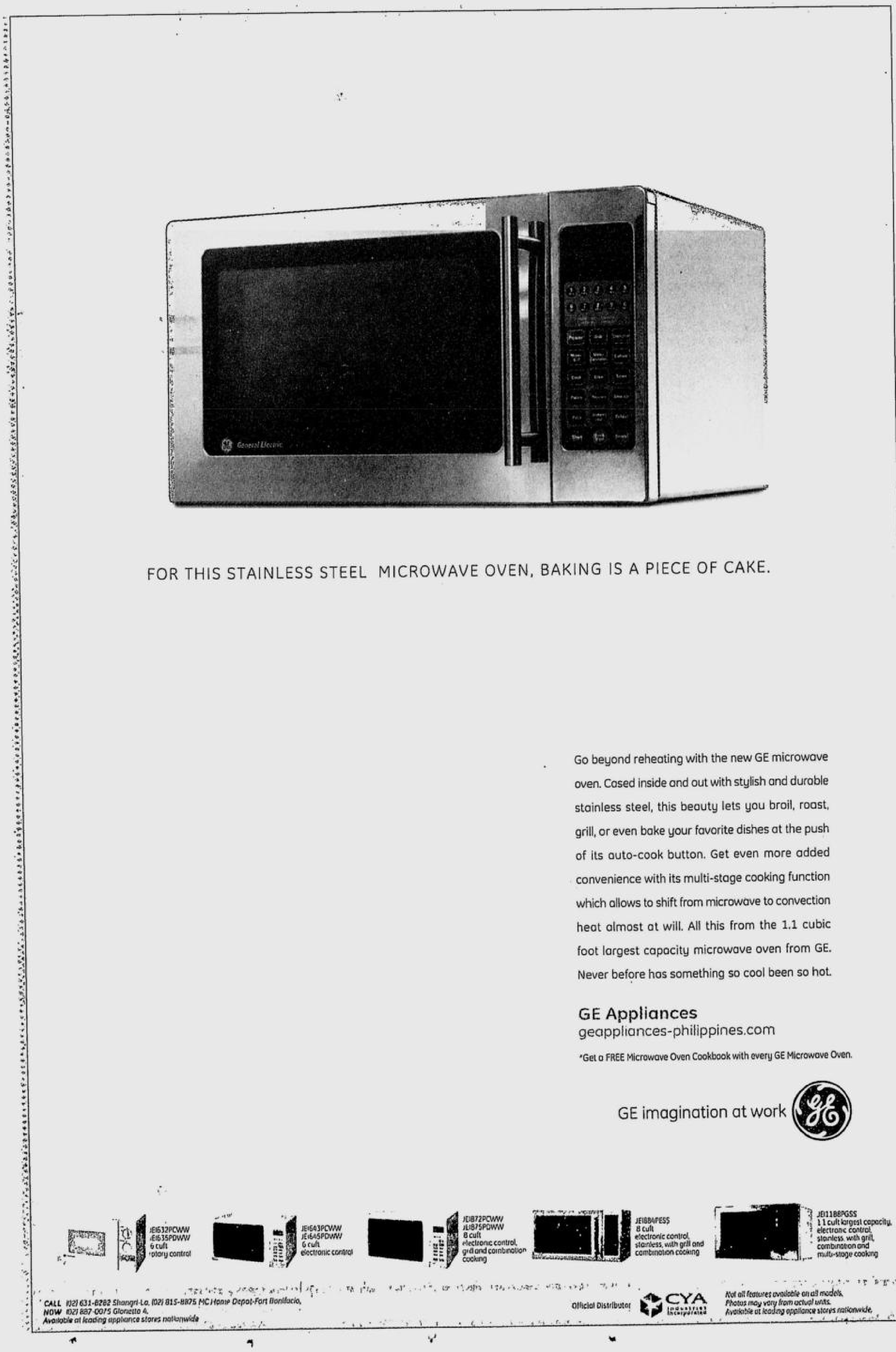
Close ties between the Chinese Communist Party and the CPP ended when Beijing and Manila established diplomatic ties in 1975.

Chinese aid to fight rebels

In April, Chinese President Hu Jintao visited the Philippines during which China signed deals for $1.6 billion worth of loans and investments in Philippine mining and infrastructure projects.

China is also extending $1.2 million in military assistance to the Philippines, which Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said would be used in the government campaign against communist rebels.

Cruz said that the government wanted the "aid in the form of equipment because we will start building what we call 'freedom' roads in 500 conflict areas in several regions where there have been very strong rebel presence and activities." *With a report from Volt Contreras; additional data from Chona Galang and Maricar Tolosa, PDI Research*



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Corrections

IN THE DEC. 23 issue, an item in the Entertainment roundup on Page A2-7—"Furious Marissa"—misstated that a woman, said to be the daughter of Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office public relations manager Manny Garcia, tried to prevent actress Marissa Delgado's dance troupe from performing at the PCSO Christmas party. The incident involved Garcia's niece—not his daughter.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 24 issue, a caption of a front-page photo misspelled the name of the Filipino girl whose winning design graced postcards and welcome cards for delegates to the recent World Trade Organization meeting in Hong Kong. The correct spelling of the the girl's name is Mary Loise—not Louise—Magno.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a caption on Page A3 misstated the unit of the honor guard shown in the photo beside the coffin of former Sen. Robert Barbers. The honor guard belonged to the Philippine National Police—not the Philippine Marines.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a story on Page A3—"Barbers' biggest regret: Antiterror bill's nonpassage"—misstated that Republic Act No. 1965, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, repealed the Dangerous Drug Act of 1972. What repealed the Dangerous Drug Act of 1972 was Republic Act No. 9165.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a story on Page A7—"Defensor: Denudation not to blame for Mindoro flood"—erroneously referred to Calapan in Oriental Mindoro as a town. Calapan is a city.

CHINESE AND AUSTRALIAN fireworks light up the Philippine sky during the first day of the World Pyrolympics. EDWIN BACASMAS

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PNP: Don't fire guns

From page A1

not to fire their guns indiscriminately to usher in the New Year.

"Sometimes I get fed up with the police doing this routine year after year after year," said Pacheco, who is also president of Kapatiran, a platform-based political party.

"Prolife efforts should not begin and stop during the New Year," Pacheco said.

Ironic

"What an irony that Christmas is supposed to bring the message of peace and yet people get killed or injured because of firing of guns," he said. "Are we not supposed to be Christians?"

The Southern Police District said it was opening its firing range to civilian gun enthusiasts who wish to fire their weapons to celebrate.

But Pacheco said what was needed was a complete change of attitude toward life.

"It is ironic here that the police are 'friendlier' to the gun industry than to peace advocates. I'm not saying the police are 'unfriendly' to us, they're just indifferent," he said.

Since the mid-1980s, Pacheco has been promoting his vision of a "gunless society," where only law enforcers would be allowed to carry guns in public.

Campaign against violence

Last year, he helped establish Kapatiran, accredited as a national party by the Commission on Elections, to pursue his campaign.

Kapatiran plans to field candidates who possess a "consistent ethic of life," who will work to dismantle structures that glorify vice and violence and who will push for progressive disarmament.

At the heart of the problem of indiscriminate firing lies the Filipinos' love affair with guns and the lack of political will to confront it, said the 73-year-old Pacheco.

"We all don't want violence, but do you see a party here committed to peace, to progressive disarmament? Something as precious as this should not be left to chance," he said.

Already, the specter of indiscriminate holiday firing has begun.

Pacheco narrated how a few days ago, his relatives at White Plains subdivision in Quezon City woke up to find a hole in the ceiling of their bathroom, and a bullet slug on the floor.

During a seven-day monitoring, the Department of Health yesterday said it had recorded 70 fireworks-related injuries, three wounded by stray bullets and five cases of watusi-ingestion that included one death—Ranillo Salazar, 26, from Caloocan.

Last year, holiday firing wounded 33 people and killed 10-year-old Mary Jane Acuna, who was watching TV at home in Tondo, Manila, when a bullet came through the roof and hit her in the forehead.

What can be done?

Pacheco said for a start, the government could ban toy guns, the movie industry could refrain from sending the message that disputes are best resolved through force and Congress could enact a law banning the carrying of guns in public.

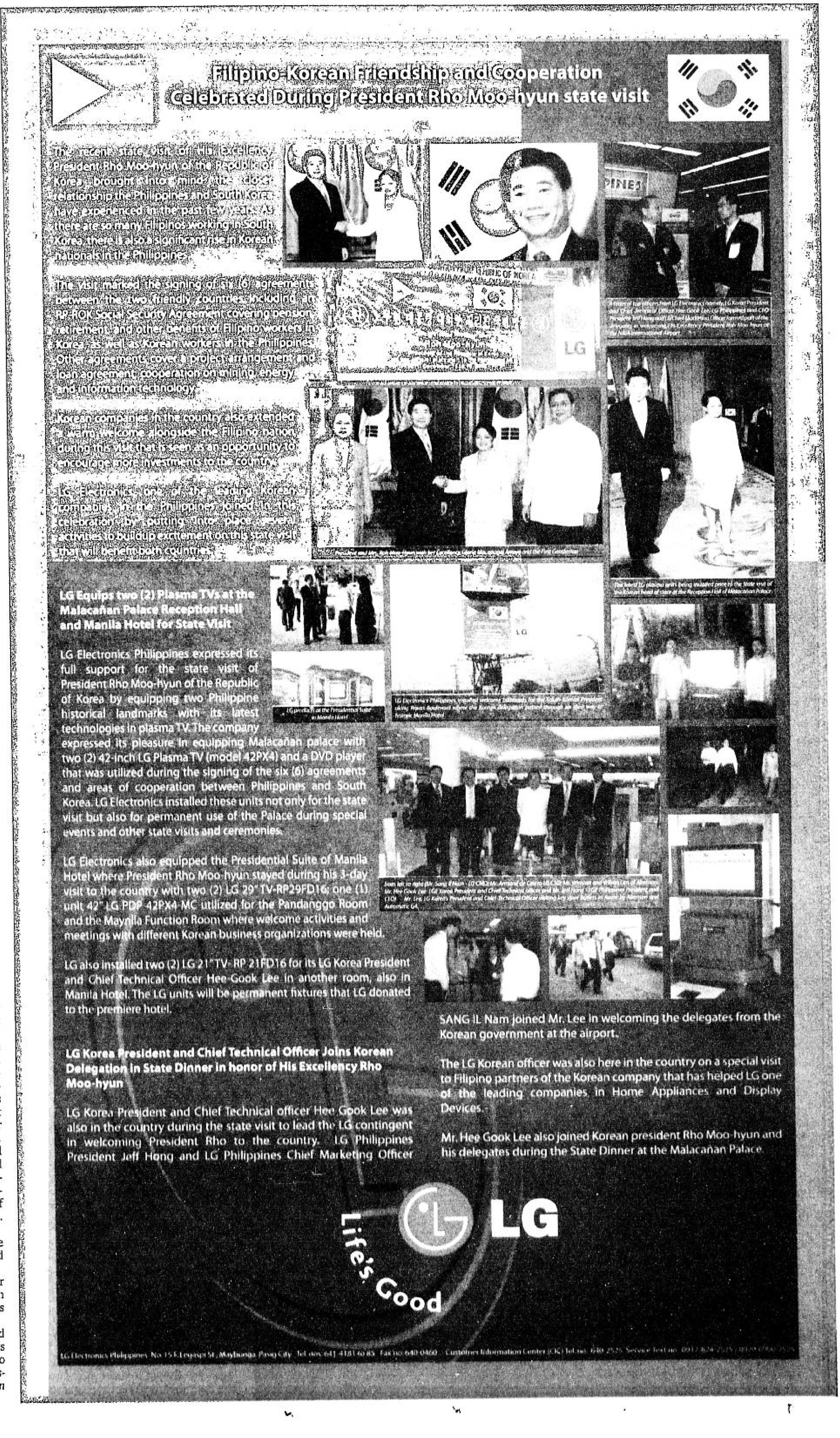
As of early this year, there were some 900,000 registered guns in the country and nearly half of their owners had expired licenses, and, therefore, their weapons were considered "loose firearms," police statistics showed. On top of that, there were about 150,000 loose firearms nationwide, a number of them in the hands of private armed groups.

A seven-month amnesty program netted around 7,500 guns. The program, which started in March and ended in September, also deposited P27.5 million into the country's coffers, according to Chief Supt. Arturo Cacdac, head of the police's Firearms and Explosives Division. Cacdac considered the drive a "success."

"Every loose firearm removed from the streets is good for law enforcement, and good for the community," he said.

This week, the police started sealing their service firearms with masking tape or scotch tape. Police whose guns have broken seals would be asked for an explanation.

Ground commanders have also been told to conduct joint patrols with military officers inside or near military camps in an effort to monitor and quickly respond to cases of indiscriminate firing. *With reports from Jocelyn R. Uy and Leila B. Salaverria*



Filipino-Korean Friendship and Cooperation Celebrated During President Rho Moo-hyun state visit

The recent state visit of His Excellency President Rho Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea, brought into mind the closer relationship the Philippines and South Korea have experienced in the past few years. As there are so many Filipinos working in South Korea, there is also a significant rise in Korean nationals in the Philippines.

The visit marked the signing of six (6) agreements between the two friendly countries including an RP-ROK Social Security Agreement covering pension, retirement, and other benefits of Filipino workers in Korea, as well as Korean workers in the Philippines. Other agreements cover a project arrangement and loan agreement, cooperation on mining, energy and information technology.

Korean companies in the country also extended a warm welcome alongside the Filipino nation during this visit that is seen as an opportunity to encourage more investments to the country.

LG Electronics, one of the leading Korean companies in the Philippines joined in the celebration by putting into place several activities to buildup excitement on this state visit that will benefit both countries.

President and Mrs. Roh Moo-Hyun with her Excellency Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and the First Gentleman

The latest LG plasma units being installed prior to the State visit of the Korean head of state at the Reception Hall of Malacañan Palace.

LG Equips two (2) Plasma TVs at the Malacañan Palace Reception Hall and Manila Hotel for State Visit

LG Electronics Philippines expressed its full support for the state visit of President Rho Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea by equipping two Philippine historical landmarks with its latest technologies in plasma TV. The company expressed its pleasure in equipping Malacañan palace with two (2) 42-inch LG Plasma TV (model 42PX4) and a DVD player that was utilized during the signing of the six (6) agreements and areas of cooperation between Philippines and South Korea. LG Electronics installed these units not only for the state visit but also for permanent use of the Palace during special events and other state visits and ceremonies.

LG products at the Presidential Suite in Manila Hotel

LG Electronics also equipped the Presidential Suite of Manila Hotel where President Rho Moo-hyun stayed during his 3-day visit to the country with two (2) LG 29" TV-RP29FD16; one (1) unit 42" LG PDP 42PX4-MC utilized for the Pandanggo Room and the Maynila Function Room where welcome activities and meetings with different Korean business organizations were held.

LG also installed two (2) LG 21" TV-RP 21FD16 for its LG Korea President and Chief Technical Officer Hee-Gook Lee in another room, also in Manila Hotel. The LG units will be permanent fixtures that LG donated to the premiere hotel.

LG Korea President and Chief Technical Officer Joins Korean Delegation in State Dinner in honor of His Excellency Rho Moo-hyun

LG Korea President and Chief Technical officer Hee Gook Lee was also in the country during the state visit to lead the LG contingent in welcoming President Rho to the country. LG Philippines President Jeff Hong and LG Philippines Chief Marketing Officer SANG IL Nam joined Mr. Lee in welcoming the delegates from the Korean government at the airport.

The LG Korean officer was also here in the country on a special visit to Filipino partners of the Korean company that has helped LG one of the leading companies in Home Appliances and Display Devices.

Mr. Hee Gook Lee also joined Korean president Rho Moo-hyun and his delegates during the State Dinner at the Malacañan Palace.

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4 GIs charged with rape

From page A1

vails," he added, conceding that the provisions on custody were "really in [the Americans'] favor.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño told reporters that the Department of Justice would "abide by the VFA agreement that the US Embassy can retain custody of all the accused."

But Zuño said this did not mean that private prosecutors could not ask the court to assert its jurisdiction and order local authorities to acquire custody of the Americans.

He said the "final decision" would "come from the court."

Zuño also said it would not be far-fetched for the custody issue to reach the Supreme Court. But he said this would be disadvantageous to the prosecution given the fact that it had only one year to complete the judicial proceedings.

Sought for a reaction, the 22-year-old woman and her family—who have since returned home to their native Zamboanga City—sent the INQUIRER a text message saying they were "very happy."

Those charged were Staff Sergeant Chad Brian Carpentier, Lance Corporals Daniel Smith, Dominic Duplantis and Keith Silkwood, and van driver Timoteo Soriano Jr.

Two other American soldiers—Lance Cpl. Albert Lara and Cpl. Corey Burris—were cleared after a monthlong preliminary investigation.

"We believe that the victim was raped," the prosecutors said in a resolution filed before lawyer John Aquino, clerk of court at the Olongapo Regional Trial Court.

"The US military authorities holding them in custody pursuant to the [VFA] are hereby authorized to release them [to local authorities] unless held for some other cause or causes," the prosecutors said.

The alleged rape occurred on Nov. 1. The woman filed a complaint on Nov. 3.

'Least guilty'

The prosecutors dismissed the complaint against Burris and Lara because "it cannot be inferred from the records that they were inside the van when the incident occurred, despite the earlier allegation of the unreliable Soriano."

Jalandoni said Silkwood and Duplantis were the "least guilty" and could turn state witness.

Soriano was named a principal accused because he "drove the van in a slow and roundabout way, precisely to give Smith more time to sexually ravish the victim," the prosecutors said, adding:

"Thus, Soriano, like Carpentier, having exhibited overt acts, conspiracy among them is established."

They said Carpentier, the platoon leader, failed to exercise his "moral ascendancy" over his men.

Citing VFA provisions, Viray said the prosecution would leave it to the Department of Foreign Affairs to determine the appropriate detention center for the four Americans.

Among the possible detention sites are the jails in Olongapo, the National Bureau of Investigation, and the "brig," a prison facility maintained by the US Navy until 1991 at the then Subic Naval Base, now a free port.

Jan. 3 raffle

The raffle of the case to at least three RTCs in Olongapo is set for Jan. 3, said clerk of court Aquino. The judge assigned to the case will then issue arrest warrants for the five accused.

PROSECUTORS DO IT: Raymond Viray reads the resolution finally charging four American Marines with raping a young Filipina in Subic; City Prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni looks on.
PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

But according to Jalandoni, the accused may also voluntarily surrender.

Viray and Jalandoni said they would serve as public prosecutors during the trial and allow private prosecutors to assist them.

Jalandoni said the judicial proceedings should be completed in one year, in accordance with a provision of the VFA.

Citing the DFA interpretation, Viray said the reckoning would start on the date of the filing of the information for the charges.

But even as the four accused undergo trial in a Philippine court, the US Navy has set court-martial proceedings against them in Okinawa, Jalandoni said.

"We will have parallel proceedings," he said.

Petition for review

Katrina Legarda, lead counsel of the complainant, said that while the legal team was glad about the filing of charges, it was "seriously considering" a petition for partial review questioning the exclusion of Lara and Burris.

She pointed out that Smith, in a report on his interrogation by the US Naval Criminal Investigative Service, admitted the presence of the two other Marines in the van.

Benjamin Formoso, counsel for Smith, said he would file a motion to quash the resolution.

He claimed that what had transpired between Smith and the woman was sex with consent.

Formoso also said the resolution had "prejudiced" the business climate in Olongapo and the free port.

"No ship will dock anymore," he said, adding that "two big [US military] ships" were diverted to Singapore in November as a result of the incident.

The custody issue alone will "take time," Formoso said, adding that he would ask the court to determine if it would be appropriate to hand Smith to local authorities.

Still here

The US Embassy in Manila has kept custody of the six original suspects, saying they had remained in the country to face judicial proceedings.

In a statement yesterday, the embassy said those charged were still here, and mentioned Smith and company by name.

It noted that the complaint against the "other US military personnel"—referring to Burris and Lara—had been dismissed, but did not make clear if they were still in the country.

The DFA formally asked the US Embassy on Nov. 16 to turn over the six soldiers, to no avail.

"The US will continue to cooperate with Philippine authorities in accordance with the VFA as the case moves to trial under Philippine jurisdiction," the embassy said, adding:

"[Washington remains] committed to seeing that justice is served, and looks forward to a fair and impartial process that can provide for a just outcome." *With reports from Volt Contreras and Armand N. Nocum in Manila*

GMA allies say fresh ouster moves doomed to fail

From page A1

"They no longer want to interfere in the same way (the military) interfered in the past, when (it) helped remove power from a sector of the elite and favored another. They want a more rational approach that will not perpetuate this system," Robles said.

Asked if the rebels on active duty had a connection to the group identified with former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat, Robles said: "I don't think so." Abat earlier this month proclaimed a revolutionary government with himself as president. He is facing sedition charges.

Still, Robles said that the administration needed to put closure to the "Hello Garci" controversy that led to the impeachment attempt against Ms Arroyo over allegations she stole last year's election and perpetrated the P728-million fertilizer fund that was allegedly used for Ms Arroyo's campaign kitty.

File charges

Clarita Carlos, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines and former president of the National Defense College, said the controversies could only be resolved if former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante were charged in court.

"Charges should be filed if indeed Garcillano and Bolante did wrong. They should have their day in court for (the controversies) to have a resolution. That is the rule of law," Carlos said in an interview.

"Unless the opposition gets its act together and charges are filed and these controversies resolved, it is more likely that President Arroyo will survive until 2010," she added.

No-election part of healing

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the Consultative Commission had recommended amendments to the Constitution and the scrapping of the 2007 elections to pave the way for the setting up of a parliamentary system in 2010 to resolve political divisions caused by elections.

"It's because we want to have some political healing. So we could have unity," Ermita told RMN radio in response to the opposition's declaration on Monday that Ms Arroyo's troubles were far from over even if she was able to survive the worst political crisis to hit her administration.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye added that "all the President's detractors want to do is to make trouble for the people who are already suffering from the brunt of high oil prices, calamities and the lack of jobs."

Rep. Antonio Cuenco (Lakas, Cebu City), chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, said the opposition plot was doomed from its conception.

GMA stronger

"The opposition miscalculated the President's ability and capability to lead the nation and surmount the political storm. They never thought they would be facing their toughest political opponent. Theirs was a record of no hit and lots of misses," Cuenco said.

Unfortunately for the opposition, Cuenco said its ouster moves only made the President stronger and more determined to meet the challenges head-on.

While critics see no end to Ms Arroyo's problems, British Ambassador to Manila Peter Beckingham told reporters that the political outlook looked upbeat.

"I'm pleased that there seems to be a degree of resolution to some of the uncertainties this year," Beckingham said.

He added that the British Embassy had reported positively to London the developments on a wide variety of issues in the Philippines, including the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the economy.

British review positive

"We're sending a sort of review of the year and it sounds a positive note about the economy because we do believe that the President and her government have put in place quite important changes this year," Beckingham said.

He said that the British government was watching closely the moves to amend the 1987 Constitution, and added that the European view welcomed the proposal by the Consultative Commission to have more openness in ownership by foreign firms.

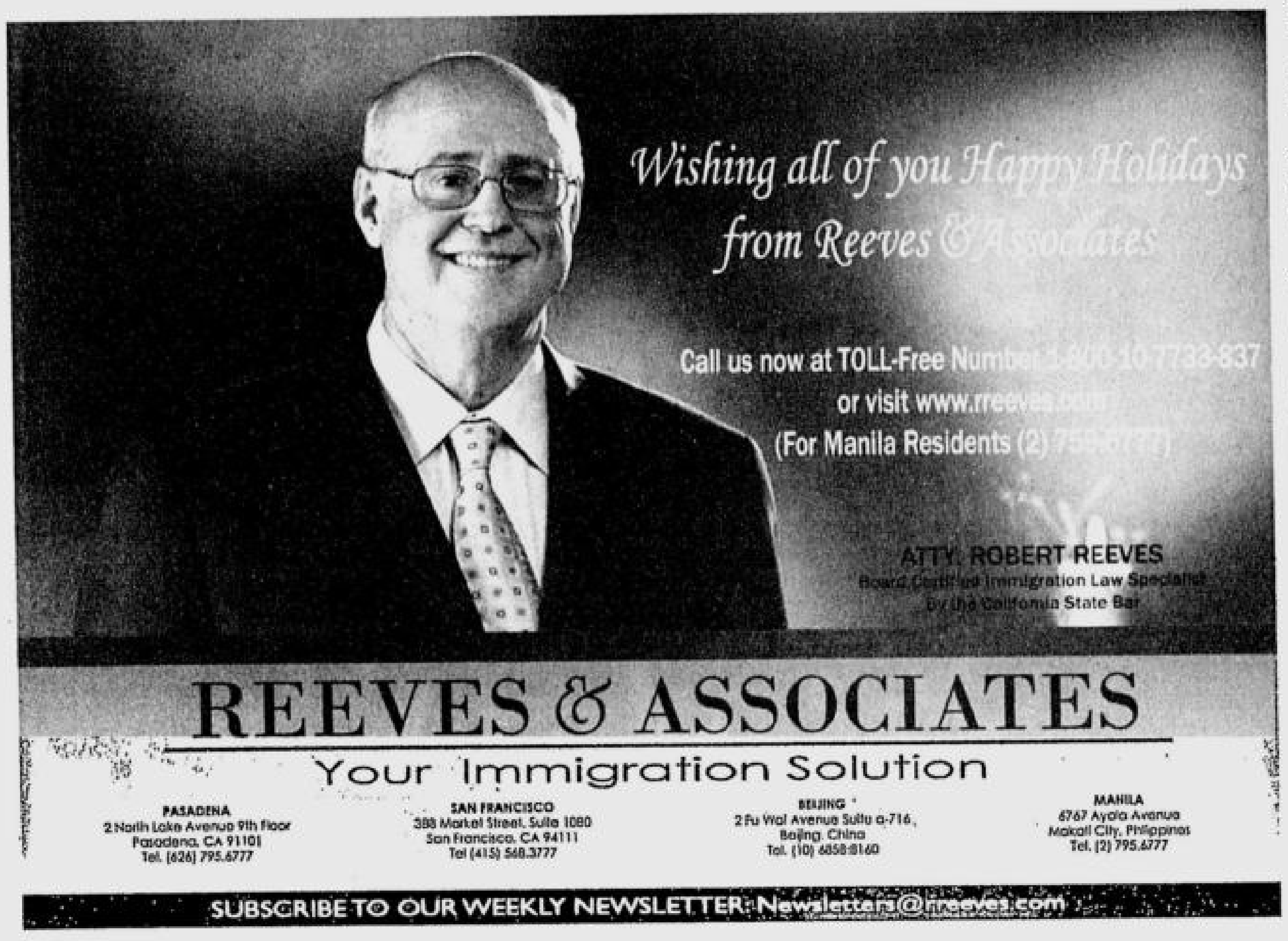
Investors' confidence

Beckingham noted that the political turmoil—which nearly saw the ouster of Ms Arroyo—had not dampened British investors' confidence in the Philippines.

Next year, the envoy said British Trade Minister Ian Pearson and the new Lord Mayor of the city of London—who holds the rank of Cabinet minister when he travels and who Beckingham described as one of the most important people in the financial services sector in the United Kingdom—were due to visit the Philippines.

The Lord Mayor's visit in May will coincide with the annual meeting of the British chambers of commerce in the Asia Pacific called "Britain in Asia Pacific," which will be held in Manila, Beckingham added.

Beckingham noted that there had been three major British investments in the Philippines for 2005—the setting up of a call center by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (HSBC) that gave more than 2,000 jobs to Filipinos, the opening of luxury retailer Debenhams in a local shopping mall and the British-Filipino joint venture for the manufacture of ethanol near Bacolod.



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GMA stands as 'ninang' to close aide

From page A1

tend to at the wedding yesterday of a female aide who serves as her close-in security.

She stood as a principal sponsor when Chief Insp. Sonia Cabantiles married Chief Insp. Jonathan Calixto in a ceremony that wedded the old and new Cordillera.

The 30-year-old Cabantiles, a member of the Presidential Security Group, and her groom are both 1998 graduates of the Philippine National Police Academy, according to the bride's brother, Oscar, a councilor in the mining town of Itogon in Benguet.

Cabantiles is an Ibaloi who hails from Barangay Dalupirip in Itogon. Dalupirip is among the villages that protested the construction of the 375-megawatt San Roque multipurpose power plant, on grounds that portions of the community would be fully submerged in dam water.

Calixto is from a family of law enforcers from Besao, Mountain Province, which hosts some of the oldest Cordillera relics, including an ancient stone calendar that still guides the village's planting cycle.

Pageant of cultures

The wedding was a pageant of cultures although the sponsors' list read like a who's who in politics and the police service (Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao, Chief Supt. Vidal Querol of the National Capital Region Police Office, Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan, Benguet Vice Gov. Crescencio Pacalso and Itogon Mayor Mario Godio).

Wearing a jacket with red and black stripes designed by highlander Narda Capuyan, Ms Arroyo mixed perfectly with the crowd of elderly men and women dressed in the festival attire of the Cordillera.

She marched under an arch of swords raised by rows of PNPA cadets in honor of the bridal couple.

Unfortunately, the President missed the indigenous wedding ritual prepared for the couple by their families at the Baguio Convention Center where, Councilor Cabantiles said, Besao and Ibaloi dances were performed to introduce the two "marrying" clans to each other.

One and only

Addressing members of his clan, Calixto acknowledged his *ninang* with a declaration in Filipino: *"Walang ibang pangulo kung hindi ang nag-iisang* Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (There is no other President except the one and only Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo)."

His kin were amused that he addressed them in Filipino instead of Ilocano, in which Ms Arroyo is fluent.

The President took the declaration well.

SECRET OF GMA'S STAYING POWER: A glimpse of it is right here as she surfs in San Juan, La Union, on Tuesday where she falls often and gets up on her feet as soon as she does. AP

In fact, a Palace aide told the INQUIRER, "she has been smiling a lot since she got here."

Holiday activities

On Monday afternoon, Ms Arroyo mingled with tourists in front of the Mansion, the presidential house in Baguio where she and her family are staying.

A trip to La Union for a few hours of surfing was also scheduled.

Today, the President will feed streetchildren at the Bishop's House in Baguio.

Lomibao told reporters that 2005 had been the administration's worst year. He added, however, that the New Year might bring blessings.

Citing economists, Lomibao said the country had suffered from the El Niño-induced drought, the successive oil price increases and political uncertainty.

"In 2006, there will be more debate on the total change of the government structure, so maybe people will be more engrossed [in this issue]," he said.

Owners to get P870M . . .

From page A1

decided with finality to scrap the stock distribution option (SDO) at Luisita after 16 years of implementation and to award the land to the farm workers.

First one revoked

Luisita is the first landholding whose SDO has been revoked in favor of land distribution. Of the country's 13 stock schemes approved by PARC, Luisita covers the biggest area.

The SDO is an alternative to the distribution of the land provided for under Republic Act No. 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. Instead of physically owning the land, farmers are made part owners through shares of stocks in the corporation managing the estates.

While Hacienda Luisita measures 4,915 ha, the actual land to be distributed to farm worker beneficiaries (FWBs) will be smaller.

The land for distribution will not include the 500 ha that had been converted to industrial and commercial use, the 77-ha tapped by the BCDA for the expressway, and a still undetermined portion occupied by roads and private residences of the land owners.

The conversion of the 500 ha was approved by the DAR in August 1996 after the FWBs endorsed the proposal, while the payment for the 77 ha was finalized early this year.

Minus the 577 ha, the DAR will have to pay for only 4,338 ha. At P200,000 per hectare, this will amount to P867.6 million.

A source earlier said that HLI, which owns and controls the vast Cojuangco sugar land in Tarlac, wanted the same rate for Luisita as the BCDA valuation.

Not earning

But another DAR official, who asked not to be named, said that this was nearly impossible considering the average price of sugar lands. The HLI's admission that it was not earning from the hacienda also indicated that the estate was not productive and could not command a high price.

Nieto, who is overseeing the CARP coverage of Luisita, said the Land Bank of the Philippines would make a valuation of the land.

The DAR is expected to issue an official notice of coverage to the HLI next week. The notice will start the process of placing Hacienda Luisita under CARP.

Nieto said the coverage of Luisita could take at least a year, considering the huge number of beneficiaries.

There were around 6,000 farm worker beneficiaries when the SDO agreement was signed in 1989, but HLI claims it has given stocks to around 11,000 farmers as of June.

Nieto said identifying the qualified FWBs would be one of the hardest parts of the coverage of Hacienda Luisita.

Petition in cyberspace: Abalos et al. resign now

From page A1

Posted by Augusto Lagman, former president of the Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines (ITFP), the petition supports the report of the Senate blue ribbon committee which also found the Commission on Elections (Comelec) commissioners and the members of the Comelec Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) criminally liable for awarding an "egregiously fraudulent" contract to Mega Pacific Consortium.

The P1.3-billion contract was for the supply of computers to be used in the 2004 elections.

The blue ribbon committee also recommended that the commissioners and the BAC members "vacate their positions."

The online petition is a copy of a letter Lagman sent to the Comelec, the Supreme Court and the joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the modernization of elections. Aside from Abalos, it is asking for the resignation of other commissioners and officials allegedly involved in the deal.

As of press time, it had the signatures of 100 individuals supporting the petition.

Ombudsman doing nothing

According to the petition, it has been two years since the Supreme Court directed the Office of the Ombudsman to determine the criminal liability of election officials and still nothing has been done.

"The Comelec commissioners and the members of the bids and awards committee continue to collect salaries; the Comelec has not returned the equipment to the suppliers and has not recovered what they paid; and to add insult to injury, they continue to spend millions renting space to warehouse the equipment," wrote Lagman, who has 41 years of experience in the IT field and is now chief executive officer of Systems Standards Inc.

The petition urged the Ombudsman to elevate the case against the Comelec officials to the Sandiganbayan. They also called on Congress to initiate impeachment proceedings against Abalos and those involved in the deal.

The decent thing to do

"Unless these commissioners are replaced, we can forget about clean and honest elections as well as election automation in 2007," the petition said. "[Resignation] is the only decent thing for them to do."

However, in a letter to the Senate blue ribbon committee, Abalos and Comelec Commissioners Rufino Javier, Mehol Sadain, Florentino Tuason Jr. and Resurreccion Borra stood pat on their stand not to resign.

The committee's suggestion for them to resign was "not an appropriate action inasmuch as the Comelec has always done its best to protect public interest," they said. "Resignation is tenable only if the commissioners committed acts which subverted public interest ... Resignation will give the false impression that the commissioners are guilty of wrongdoing."

Rebuttal

They added that Comelec officials "have responsibilities to the Filipino people which can only be complied with if they continue to discharge their functions as commissioners."

The five-page letter rebutted findings of the committee and said the Comelec was never irresponsible in the performance of its duties.

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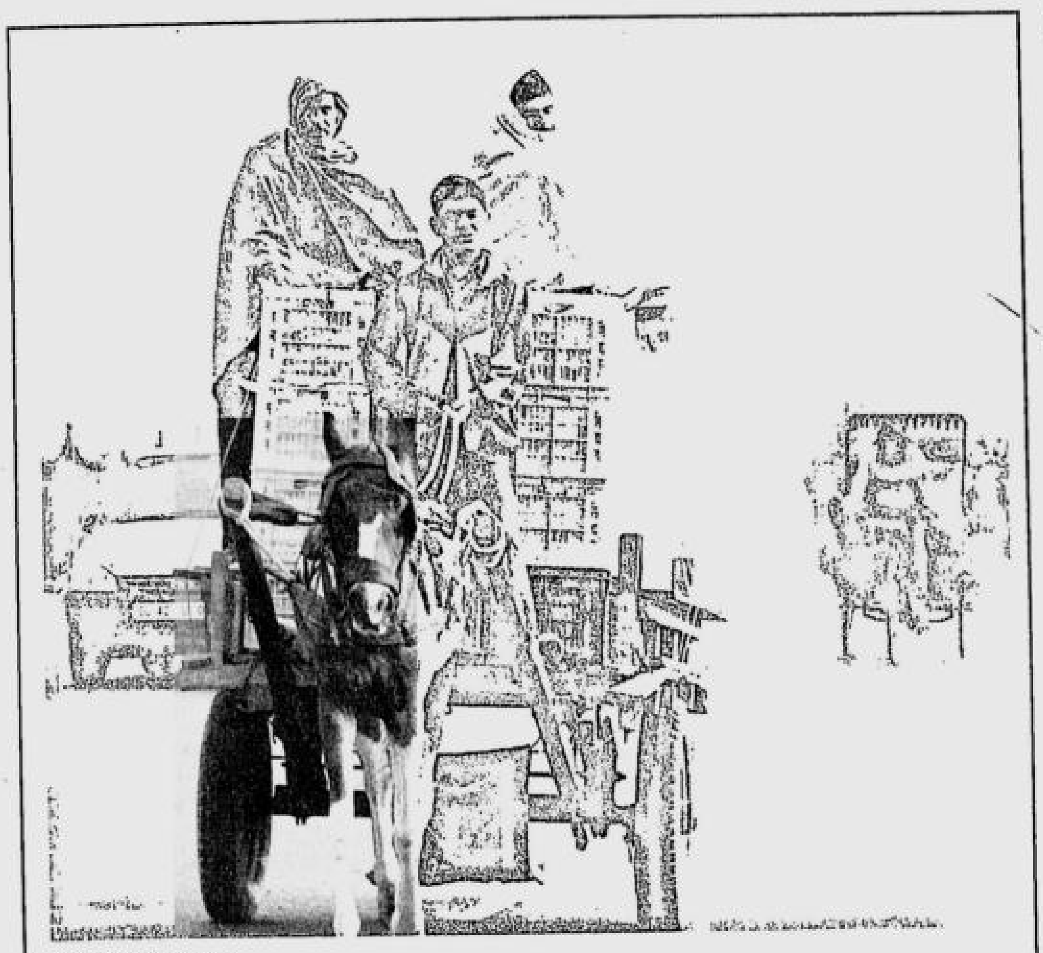
The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco



COLD INDIA
An Indian horse cart driver guides his carriage through traffic on a foggy morning in New Delhi, Dec. 27. Cold weather in northern India is continuing with heavy fog disrupting rail and air travel.
AFP

Thai coast seen not ready for new tsunami

PHUKET, THAILAND—A LEADING METEOROLOGIST, who warned a tsunami could strike Thailand seven years before one hit, said Tuesday that coastal hotels and resorts are still unprepared for another killer wave.

"At the moment, they (hotels) do not even have a map or instructions to tell the guests what to do" in a tsunami, Smith Thammasaroj said Tuesday, a day after thousands of Thais and foreigners gathered on beaches to mourn the dead from the tragedy last Dec. 26.

He said tourist facilities along the Thai coast, where the tsunami killed nearly 5,400, have not yet hooked into the well-functioning National Disaster Warning Center—which would give them quick notice of an approaching tsunami or other disaster.

Smith, the center's deputy director, headed Thailand's meteorological department when he was accused of scare-mongering after he warned in 1998 that the country's southwest coast could face a deadly tsunami.

Criticized then for causing panic and jeopardizing the critical tourist industry around the tropical resort island of Phuket, Smith retired under a shadow. He was rapidly returned to government service when his prediction proved accurate.

"Hotels are investing billions of baht (Thailand's currency) to rebuild, but they don't want to spend some 500,000 baht (US$12,200; euro10,300) more to buy a small warning system and link into the government system to warn their guests," Smith said, adding that there was no legal requirement for them to do so.

However, some hotels said they have made preparations.

"We've done rehearsals. We've practiced. We have fliers. We have signage and information in each hotel room to inform the guests," said Asnee Kankaew, resident manager of the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket. The tsunami destroyed the first floor of the hotel on Phuket's popular Patong Beach, and some guests died.

At Patong's Baan Boa Resort, employee Amaraporn Krataijan, 39, said nobody had come around for a lesson on how to react or help tourists if a tsunami hits.

"I won't know what to do," she said. "Well, if I see people run, I'll just run and follow them."

A co-worker, Ladda Khonkayan, 30, said she'd heard televised public advice about what to do if she hears the warning sirens on the beach.

"I'm ready," she said confidently. "I have to be ready. I have no choice. I'll just run." AP

YEAR IN REVIEW

Problem of immigration brought brutally home to Europe in 2005

By Marie Noelle Valles

MADRID—GRIM IMAGES OF THOUSANDS of sub-Saharan asylum-seekers trying to scale razor wire fences around two Spanish enclaves in Morocco brought the problem of immigration brutally home to Europe in 2005.

The decision by Madrid to grant legal status to some 700,000 people already based in Spain also prompted much soul-searching among its European Union partners.

But it was the bloody human drama, which unfolded in the north African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla that underlined how urgent it was to evolve a strategy in response.

Pictures of bloodied scraps of clothing stuck on the fences and makeshift ladders made of tree branches used to scale the barriers told their own story: but so did further pictures of men and women handcuffed on buses headed for the desert, where they were to be left to their own devices without sustenance.

The attraction for thousands of would-be immigrants of two European pin-pricks on the north African coast was irresistible as they poured up to the enclaves from across the continent, looking for a new life.

A combination of factors brought about the influx, which saw Spain and Morocco struggling to respond in late September and early October.

There was the combined effect of exceptional levels of drought and famine in sub-Saharan countries, coupled with the success of the fight to stem clandestine immigration to Spain from Morocco by sea.

Discouraged from pursuing traditional routes across the Straits of Gibraltar or the longer and riskier sea voyage to the Canary Islands, would-be emigrants tramped to Ceuta and Melilla, knowing that if they could only leap the tall fencing they would be into Europe and the Schengen passport-free zone.

As they made their attempts, criticism from around Europe rained down on Spain's Socialist government as EU partner states accused Madrid of attracting the immigrants with the announcement last spring that the country planned to regularize the status of some 600,000 illegal immigrants.

Germany and the Netherlands led a storm of protest which France joined, while also pointing an accusing finger at Italy, Rome having undertaken a similar exercise in 2002.

French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy accused Madrid and Rome of "opening the door wide to the whole of Europe."

Spain, the target of an outcry when it tried to expel 73 immigrants back to Morocco, suffered further embarrassment because of Morocco's clumsy efforts to dispose of the problem, by bussing hundreds of immigrants out into the desert.

They were found by outraged nongovernmental organizations, led by Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

"The pressure of the EU on their partner states to control illegal immigration has generated further abuses," complained Amnesty International, which charged that the 25-member EU bloc "respects less and less its international obligations" regarding illegal immigration.

The enclaves crisis which saw at least 11 immigrants shot dead in night time assaults on the fencing prompted Madrid to demand an EU-wide debate, with France swiftly supporting the idea.

The EU summit that followed at Hampton Court in Britain saw a commitment not to leave the Maghreb states of north Africa to shoulder alone the role of policeman of Europe's southwestern flank and an acceptance that African development is the only way to deal with immigration long-term.

In the November Euro-Mediterranean summit in Barcelona, EU states committed themselves, without going into the financial details, to "manage humanely migratory flows" and "provide aid to countries of origin and transit." AFP

Australia's richest man Packer dies

KERRY Packer AP

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIA'S RICHEST man Kerry Packer, a pugnacious media mogul with a passion for sport and gambling, died overnight in Sydney, his television network said Tuesday. He was 68.

Channel Nine gave no cause of death but Packer had been plagued by ill health for more than a decade, cheating death in 1990 when his heart stopped for several minutes while playing polo.

"He died peacefully at home with his family at his bedside," the television station said.

Packer built a multibillion-dollar broadcast and publishing empire, as well as transforming the way international cricket is played to make it more television-friendly for the media age.

His success in business was matched by a devil-may-care attitude, whether mocking the mistakes of competitors or shrugging off reports of his own heavy losses in casinos from Las Vegas to London.

"He was a man who you could truly say was larger than life," said business rival and fellow tycoon Rupert Murdoch.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard also paid tribute to the mogul, who was ranked by Forbes magazine this year as the 94th richest man in the world with a fortune of some A$6.9 billion (US5.2 billion).

"He was a great Australian. He was a larger-than-life character, and in so many ways he left his mark on the Australian community over a very long career in business," Howard told reporters.

Born on Dec. 17, 1937, Packer inherited the family business, Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd. (PBL), from his father Frank, a legendary newspaperman who was so penny-conscious that he sometimes refused to buy chairs—or notebooks—for his reporters.

Packer was not the type to back down from a challenge and when he was refused the broadcast rights to Australian Test cricket in 1977, he launched his own World Series Cricket, poaching some of the game's greatest stars.

It popularized the one-day version of the game although critics dismissed the colorful uniforms as "pyjamas" and an insult to tradition.

But he was hailed after his death as the greatest Australian contributor to the game since Donald Bradman, with Australian and South African players observing a minute's silence Tuesday before the second day of the second Test in Melbourne. AFP

Study shows how heavy drinking damages bones

NEW YORK—BONE LOSS IS AN OFTEN OVERlooked consequence of heavy drinking, but recent research has illuminated how alcohol takes a toll on the bones, according to a new report.

In a review of cell, animal and human studies, Dr. Dennis A. Chakkalakal of the Omaha VA Medical Center in Nebraska describes how heavy drinking leads to bone loss, higher risk of fractures and slower healing of bone breaks.

The main problem appears to be that alcohol inhibits the normal formation of new bone, Chakkalakal reports in the journal Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.

Though excessive drinking has been shown to promote bone thinning and fractures, some studies have suggested that moderate drinking may actually help protect bone mass—possibly because small amounts of alcohol promote new bone formation.

The opposite appears true of high amounts of alcohol, according to Chakkalakal's review.

Throughout adulthood, bone undergoes a process of "remodeling," whereby cells called osteoclasts break down small portions of old bone, and cells called osteoblasts form new bone. In healthy, younger adults, this process is usually balanced, so that bone mass is maintained.

Too much alcohol, however, appears to inhibit osteoblasts from doing their job, and heavy drinkers may start to lose bone mass in just a few years, according to Chakkalakal. The potential for bone loss climbs in tandem with drinking, evidence shows, but it's not clear where the risk threshold lies.

Most studies on alcohol and bone loss have defined "heavy" drinking as roughly six or more drinks per day. But, the review points out, there's some evidence that bone loss is a risk for people who have closer to three or more drinks a day.

Though many people know about the damage heavy drinking can inflict on the liver, far fewer know about the effects on bone, according to Dr. Terrence M. Donohue Jr., also of the Omaha VA Medical Center. Reuters

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US history textbooks kind to Clinton

PRESIDENT Clinton walks to the podium to deliver a short statement on the impeachment inquiry in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington Dec. 11, 1998.
AP

WASHINGTON—THE IMPEACHMENT of former President Bill Clinton is in a gray area of history, too long ago to be a current event, too recent to be judged in perspective.

Yet history is already judging Clinton in the place where millions of students get their information about him—textbooks.

Seven years after he was impeached in a scandal of sex, perjury and bitter politics, Clinton has become a fixture in major high school texts.

The impeachment is portrayed in the context of his two-term tenure, a milestone event, but not one that overshadows how Clinton handled the economy, crime and health care.

The most commonly used texts give straightforward recaps of Clinton's toughest days, with some flavor of how it affected the nation. Absent are any of the lurid details of his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinksy that spiced up daily news reports and late-night talk shows as the scandal and impeachment played out in 1998 and early 1999.

"It should not be in the book for titillating purposes or settling scores," said Alan Brinkley, the Columbia University provost who has written or contributed to several history text books. "It should be in the book because of its significance to our recent history."

Clinton was president from 1993 to 2001, the growing-up years of today's high school students. Even today's oldest high school students were only 10 or 11 during the height of the scandal, and today's middle schoolers were just approaching pr entering first grade.

So, for students, the impeachment is literally a subject for the history books. AP

Fewer births shrink Japan population in 2005

JAPAN'S highest mountain, Mt. Fuji, is seen in the background past skyscrapers rising above Japanese economic symbol Tokyo's Shinjuku area during sunset, Dec. 24. AFP

TOKYO—JAPAN'S POPULATION FELL THIS year for the first time since World War II, a national census showed Tuesday, raising concerns about the challenge posed to the world's number two economy by a low birth rate.

Japan's population in 2005 stood at 127.76 million people, about 20,000 short of last year's estimated population, according to the national census, which is conducted every five years.

It was the first fall since comparable records became available after the end of World War II, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, which published the findings.

Compared with the last national census in 2000, the population increased by 830,000 but the pace of growth slowed to a post-war record low of 0.7 percent.

Although the number of Japanese households increased by 5.2 percent over the past five years, the average number of household members decreased to 2.58 from 2.70, suggesting there are a growing number of single households.

With its young people increasingly choosing not to marry and finding children a burden to their careers and lifestyles, Japan joins Germany and Italy among a club of nations whose populations have started to shrink.

The average number of children a Japanese woman has in her lifetime has been steadily decreasing and marked a new record low of 1.2886 in 2004.

The declining population has fueled fears for the future of the country's pension system, as a smaller workforce supports an increasing number of pensioners.

Japan's public debt is already equivalent to over 160 percent of national output, as the government spent trillions of yen trying to stimulate growth after the "bubble economy" burst in the early 1990s.

Two weeks ago the Cabinet Office forecast that the country's population would start shrinking in 2006—already one year sooner than previously predicted.

But just a week later figures from the health ministry showed that Japan's population was set to fall for the first time in 2005, a view confirmed by the census findings.

The Cabinet Office predicted that by 2100, Japan's population would be cut to 60 million, or less than half the current total.

According to United Nations estimates, Japan had the 10th largest population in the world in 2005, accounting for two percent of the global population of 6.465 billion.

Japan, once the country with the world's ninth largest population, has now been overtaken by Nigeria, which stood at 132 million in 2005. *AFP*

Japan unveils plans to bring down alarming number of annual suicides

TOKYO—JAPAN HAS COMPILED A PLAN TO cut the annual number of suicides by roughly 8,000 over the next 10 years in a bid to bring down one of the worst suicide rates among industrialized nations.

Japan saw a surge in the number of suicides in 1998 amid economic woes stemming from high-profile bankruptcies in the financial industry the year before and the annual number of suicides has exceeded 30,000 every year since then.

Last year, there were 32,325 suicides in Japan, or 25.3 per 100,000 people, according to government data. Males accounted for over two-thirds of the total and health problems were the most common motivation, followed by economic woes.

To improve the situation, the government unveiled a package of measures this week aimed at bringing down the number of suicides to pre-1998 levels over the next 10 years.

That would mean bringing suicides down close to the 1997 total of 24,391. Suicides in Japan jumped in 1998 to 32,863 and hit a record 34,427 in 2003.

Steps to be taken include promoting counseling services at school and increasing mental health awareness in the workplace.

Other measures include building more fences on train platforms to prevent people from jumping in front of trains, and making available free filtering software that limits access to Internet sites that promote suicide.

International statistics show that Japan has the second highest suicide rate among Group of Eight industrialized countries, behind only Russia.

According to data available on the World Health Organization's website (http://www.who.int/en/), the suicide rate in Japan was 24.1 per 100,000 people in 2000, compared to 39.4 in Russia. Suicide rates for other G8 countries include 18.4 in France and 10.4 in the United States.

No religious prohibition exists against suicide in Japan and it has long been seen as a way to escape failure or save loved ones from embarrassment.

In recent years, an increasing number of Japanese have died in group suicides after meeting online via suicide websites.

While the number remains a fraction of the total, police say the number of people who died in Internet-linked group suicides totaled 54 in 2004, up from 34 in 2003. *Reuters*

Short, brutal lives: Men in Russia dying too easily

By Sebastian Smith

PEREPECHINO, RUSSIA—HE IS nameless and his grave gets no visitors, but corpse number 2108 in Perepechinskoye cemetery outside Moscow has a message for the world: Men in Russia are dying too easily.

The man, commemorated on a tiny metal plaque only by his ID number, sex, and date of burial, is one of 17,500 unidentified bodies discovered in Moscow over the last five years, often after lying whole winters in the snowdrifts where they died.

About two thirds are male and they all end up in Perepechinskoye in the shadow of a silver birch forest, down the road from a giant municipal rubbish tip.

"They are mostly drunks and poor immigrant workers from ex-Soviet countries who were killed in the winter weather," said Sergei, a cemetery official who would not give his last name, as gravediggers shoveled frozen earth.

The approximately 3,000 unidentified bodies buried here each year are also the tip of a wider and potentially disastrous tendency in Russia.

In a study earlier this month, the World Bank said Russian men have "short, brutal lives" due to heart disease, alcoholism and traffic accidents and that the country faces an "alarming population decline."

Just 143 million people live in the world's biggest country, down at least six million from 1992 and falling every day, in large part because average male life expectancy is only 58 years—16 years less than in western Europe.

At the same time, fertility rates have plummeted from 2.0 to 1.3 children per woman since the collapse of the Soviet Union and last year there were more abortions than births. Their life expectancy is 72—better than for men, but still low by Western standards.

Throw in an HIV/AIDS pandemic and a mortality rate for traffic accidents almost double that in big Western countries and the statistics portray a country heading toward disaster.

Explanations for men's short lifespans include the stress of existence for many in the wake of the Soviet collapse, an inefficient, poorly equipped health service, and above all a centuries-old love affair with heavy drinking.

Alexander Nemtsov, a leading researcher with the health ministry, says that alcohol is linked to 30 percent of all deaths in Russia. Alcohol poisoning alone kills about 40,000 people a year, he says, compared to a few hundred in the United States.

"Vodka is our national misfortune," Viktor, an ambulance driver at Moscow's First City Hospital, said on a recent Friday evening, as a steady trickle of men with bloodied faces stumbled into the emergency ward.

When the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, tried to keep Russians from the bottle in the 1980s by restricting alcohol production, they turned to "homemade spirits, aftershave, solvents and perfumes," Viktor said. "I have a lot of friends who had OK jobs, then lost everything through drink. They drank everything they earned."

Nursing a beer bottle in sub-zero temperatures outside the Prospekt Mir metro station, graphic artist Sergei Ivanov, 33, said that the stress of having to adapt to capitalism was the real killer.

"In Soviet days, you got paid and you knew that tomorrow you'd get the same amount of money. Now you are forced to run around and have no idea whether you'll be fired the next day."

Sociologist Alexei Levinson at the Levada pollsters says that disrespect for human life has penetrated male society, encouraging ever more destructive behavior—mostly among the poor and uneducated, but also "among generals and many others."

"The male population ... sees a very low value in human life, including its own. You could say there is a culture of not looking after your own health, your life or security. It's a soldier's mentality, like in war." *AFP*

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ISSN
0116-2642

INQUIRER

Vol. 21 No. 20

Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net

OPINION

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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

•100% soy ink•

Publisher **Isagani Yambot**
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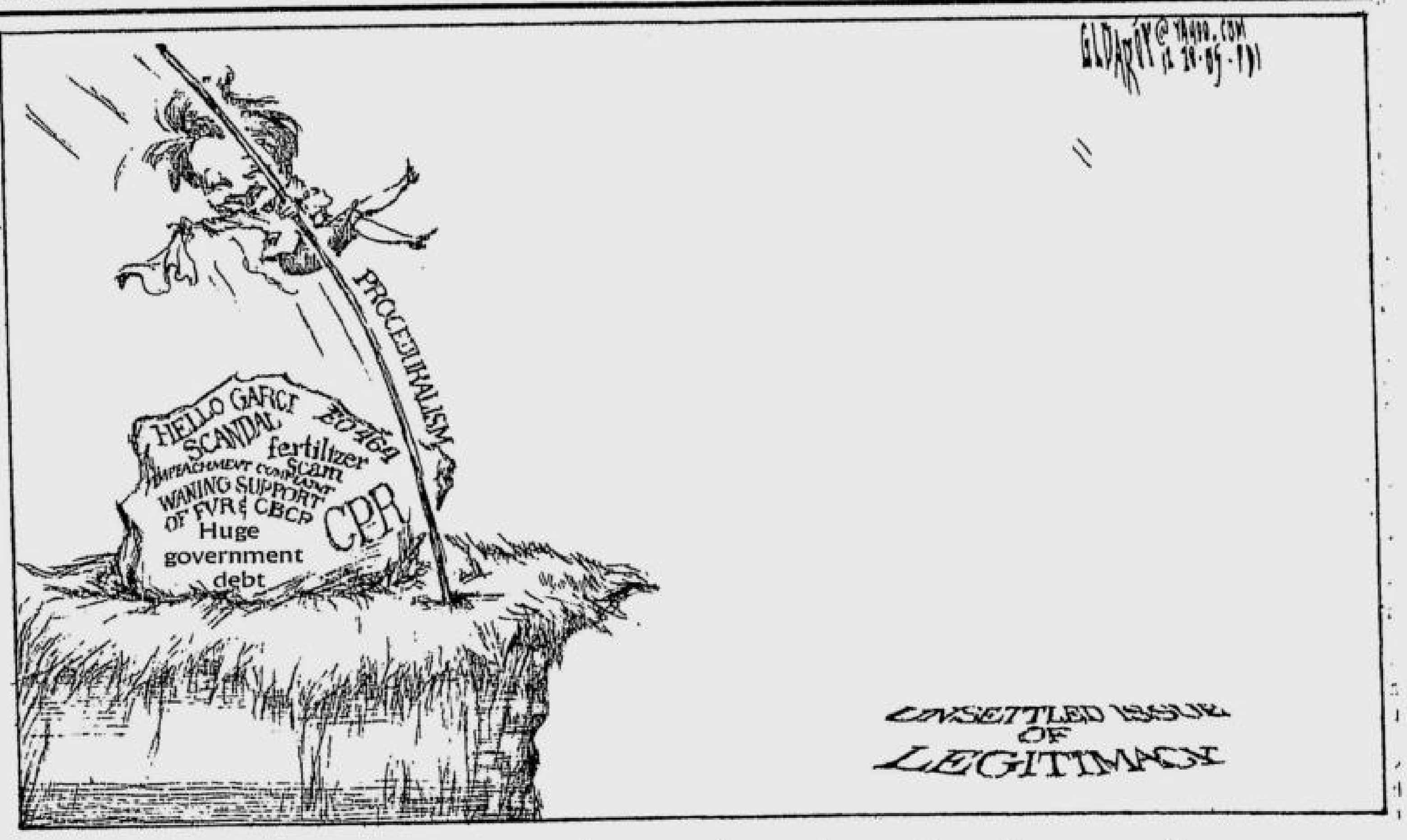

Sacrifice

EDITORIAL

IT MAY SEEM ODD TO CALL FOR AN EPIDEMIC—AN epidemic of sacrifice. But sacrifice from those above is what this country desperately needs.

It is deeply disheartening to note that only two public figures have publicly disclaimed ambition: Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon and former President Fidel V. Ramos. After escaping from military custody, the former announced that in opposing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, he would refuse to serve in government, "either in this one or the next." Ramos, for his part, when asked why he was pushing for a parliamentary system of government, said that he wasn't eyeing the post of prime minister, declaring bluntly that the position would represent a "demotion" for him.

There will be those, of course, who doubt the sincerity of these two men. Still the fact remains that they are the only two people around who have renounced the prospect of holding positions in government.

This year is coming to a close with ambition being the most prominent characteristic of our national leadership. President Macapagal-Arroyo herself has kept silent on the goings-on in the Consultative Commission whose members she had hand-picked and which served up a series of recommendations on a silver platter. Its majority report has been the most helpful thing to a sitting President's ambitions since a cowed, co-opted and bribed Constitutional Convention rushed a draft charter that was made to order for President Ferdinand Marcos' political plans in 1973.

The political opposition, for its part, remains fragmented, in no small part due to the titanic egos of the various politicians leading the different factions. The middle class and civil society leadership remains, in many ways, incapable of renouncing ambition. When did anyone hear from anyone—among the Hyatt 12, for example—that if called to serve in any future government, he would decline the honor?

Since time immemorial, the bane of good government in our country has been the "*tayo-tayo*" system. It's what doomed the Estrada administration, and it's what corroded the reformists who helped catapult Ms Arroyo to power. It is the same system that turned the President's husband, brother-in-law and son into symbols of the kind of unforgetting and yet unlearning kind of predatory oligarchical rule that doomed dynasties like the Bourbons in France to being toppled by revolutions, and which turned the Philippine oligarchy into a convenient pretext for Marcos to institute a new one composed of his family and friends.

The best that could be said of Philippine democracy once upon a time was that it ensured that the different contending parties took their turn at feeding from the public trough. Since the Edsa Revolution of 1986, what has happened is that those feeding at the expense of the public have tried to leave not even a single grain of rice or wheat for the regime to follow. Yet 2001 showed that the country, by temperament and principle, thinks governance should be about more than rewarding friends and expanding one's waistline while in office.

We need an epidemic of sacrifice, because we have had too many epidemics of gluttony and avarice—indeed, of all seven of the deadly sins—afflicting our leaders the moment they enter office. Sacrifice is needed regardless of political affiliation. In the United States, which has been subjected to poisonous partisanship in recent years, Americans reacted with admiration and relief to the sight of former Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush Sr. coming together in support of relief efforts for the tsunami and hurricane victims.

The country now waits with bated breath to see how the administration will react to the obvious impatience, and even disgust, demonstrated by one of its pillars of support, former President Ramos. We would go even further and suggest that the country wait for something even more noteworthy. We are a very young nation, composed overwhelmingly of the youth. We have seen little by way of inspiring behavior, on the part of those who enjoy the benefits of experience and age. Instead of waiting for Ms Arroyo to react to Ramos, we should be asking why the elders in Philippine society can't take it upon themselves to demonstrate the ability to sacrifice more for those who have less.

The annual mayhem begins in three days

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IN JUST THREE DAYS, THE PHILIPPINES will be transformed into something like a war zone with explosions everywhere, injured victims groaning and screaming in pain, a few fires here and there, and some deaths, a few felled by bullets, others by stab wounds, still others by fire and explosions. It will be bedlam in hospital emergency rooms as overworked doctors and nurses work to save lives, sew back severed fingers, amputate hopelessly shattered limbs and patch up other wounds. Afterwards, gun smoke will hang over everything like a fog and the smell of gunpowder will fill the air, and the streets will be littered with pieces of paper, ashes from burned tires and the remnants of fireworks.

What happens to us in this one night of the year that we go crazy, hurting ourselves willfully and taking risks that we ordinarily would not take? What is even more strange, we do all these things because we want to make merry. Along with Christmas, New Year's Eve is the happiest time of the year, but we choose that to blow up our fingers. Why?

Because of the Chinese. Yes, the Chinese: they introduced us to the tradition of welcoming the New Year with noise. And because they are experts in the making of fireworks, they mixed tradition with business by selling firecrackers as noisemakers.

Actually, the noise is not to welcome the New Year but to drive away the old and make room for the new. Any form of noise will do—tooting on horns, banging on pots and pans, honking the car horn, even just shouting—but there is no money in that for the merchants. So the Chinese invented the exploding of firecrackers to make a killing from their sale.

That was all right because the Chinese made safe firecrackers. The commonest is the cigarette-sized firecracker that won't hurt even if it explodes prematurely in your hand. Filipinos, however, don't know, or don't care to learn how to make those firecrackers. The easiest way to make them was by making the *triangulo*. You just fold a piece of paper several times with a pinch of gunpowder inside, put a fuse and you have a firecracker.

But the *triangulo* is too small for the Filipino's taste. It does not make a big enough bang. So to sell more, the manufacturers made bigger and bigger firecrackers: *bawang*, whistle bomb, thunder, *pla-pla* and other miniature bombs. Any one of these is powerful enough to blast your fingers and they should be classified as unsafe, but the government, both national and local, don't stop the manufacturers from making these deadly playthings. Fireworks-making in Bulacan and other places, after all, is considered a cottage industry that gives seasonal employment to the constituents of mayors and councilors. Even the law that seeks to make pyrotechnics safe did not do enough. And weak as it is, it is not even enforced strictly.

The negligence of the mayors and the police is very evident in the firecracker factories. Visit one and you will see what I am talking about. Many of the workers are young men or children. They measure explosive powder into pieces of paper or into bamboo and carton tubes to make fireworks. The powder is in containers that are within easy reach. The workers are covered from head to toe with this powder. One careless lighted cigarette butt or spark can send the whole factory exploding.

Any damn fool of a public official can plainly see that these are unsafe working conditions and should not be allowed. But it is allowed—because the factories pay the municipal government license fees and the owner is perhaps a *kumpare* of the mayor and he provides employment to many of his constituents.

The only sign that they recognize the danger is the fact that the factories are placed far apart in open fields, far from the residential houses. If one factory blows up, it won't blow up the other factories or residential houses. In short, they recognize that such factories are very dangerous but the only safeguard adopted is one that would save others when one factory blows up.

Some factories do explode, killing and injuring its workers, but the practice continues. If the mayors do not do something to make them safer, the national government should step in. But it doesn't. It is concerned with other things, such as insuring the survival of the President, or providing for the future of Cabinet members and legislators. Before attending to the survival of poor barrio folks, they first attend to their own survival.

Under the law, it is illegal to sell these miniature bombs. But they are sold openly—along the road in Bulacan, in *sari-sari* stores, in parking lots, even in first class supermarkets—in plain view of the police. But they don't do anything. Sometimes, the police conduct well-publicized raids and confiscate some of the pyrotechnic devices. Then they themselves sell some of these explosives on the sly through their agents.

Now and then a cache of firecrackers in a house explodes, setting the house, and sometimes part of the neighborhood, on fire, and some poor innocent souls are burned to death. On New Year's Eve itself, victims of firecrackers crowd the hospitals; some die, some go home minus limbs, others are blinded, and still others are discharged after being patched up for minor wounds. On any other occasion, this is a major tragedy. But on New Year's Eve, we all take it as a part of the merrymaking, a part of life. There will be more next year.

This annual mayhem can be stopped if we only have a government that is efficient and cares for its people. But alas, we don't have such a government now.

Cry to the heavens

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I GOT THIS LETTER SEVERAL WEEKS AGO in the e-mail. It's an agonized cry from a fellow journalist, one in direr circumstances than those of us in Metro Manila can ever hope to be, which compels me to publicize it. Much of it is explosive and direct in its accusations. I have taken the liberty of rephrasing some parts that seemed patently libelous. But I have kept its spirit intact. If the people named in this complaint have an answer to it, I would only be too happy to put it out here. But right now I leave the journalist to have her say:

"Dear Mr. De Quiros:

"At last I got your e-mail. Some friends from PDI gave it to me after an hour of begging! I'm one of PDI's correspondents and I was based in Batangas before I and my family were harassed by Gov. Armando Sanchez. I am still in hiding now, far from my family, after I escaped from Sanchez's goons in Batangas. And I'm probably going to spend my first Christmas away from my husband and family. I have to endure that just to be able to live.

"Last September, I was hoping that Sanchez would be suspended after Vice Gov. Ricky Recto filed corruption charges against him at the Ombudsman. Recto charged him with rigging the bidding on the P350-million Batangas provincial computerization project and awarding it to his dummy-owned computer company.

"At that time, Archbishop Ramon Arguelles had also been reporting Sanchez's anomalies to GMA, hoping that she could help. But nothing happened. Sanchez himself has been bragging he was a contributor to GMA's campaign chest in 2004. Recto has complained that some people in the Ombudsman had the gall to ask him for P5 million in exchange for Sanchez's suspension.

"Why do I know so much about *jueteng*? Because my source is very high up in government. In Batangas, I was the only one who reported Sanchez's jueteng operations and corrupt practices in the capitol. I had to go into hiding after someone tipped me off that several prison inmates were after me. I noticed several cars with red plates near our house, which I traced to the capitol. So far, all the people who have fought Governor Sanchez, including Rolando Meer, Arnel Manalo and Batangas provincial ombudsman Guillermo Gamo, have been killed.

"I was the reporter that Gamo was supposed to meet on May 31. He was killed on May 30, four days after I interviewed Sanchez on the anomalous deals at the capitol that Gamo was investigating.

"On the day that Gamo was killed, two witnesses positively identified the gunman as Rommel Matador and the police officer that he talked to before the shooting as Police Supt. Mario Pecho. Gamo's briefcase was stolen after he was shot. That briefcase contained the documents Gamo was supposed to give me. His wallet and everything else in his car were not taken.

"The CIDG officer from Task Force Gamo has warned me that the two witnesses are now missing. He said I should be extra careful now because I might be the next to disappear.

"I've been in hiding since July. But at least I'm still alive; I'm not so sure about the two witnesses. And I just want to stay alive. I used to have a life and a family. Now all I have is the will to survive.

"I wrote you this letter because of the columns you've written about the plight of local journalists. I am hoping I will not join the ranks of those who have perished for doing their job. I need all the help I can get.

"Mei Magsino."

Sanchez is innocent until proven guilty? Yes. Magsino may not be completely believed until she has come out and proven her story. But that is the point: As a journalist, I demand that Magsino be given ironclad protection to be able to do just that. As a journalist, I demand that GMA, Eduardo Ermita (whom Magsino names as one of Sanchez's protectors), and the entire PNP leadership resign immediately if something should happen to Magsino. Indeed, as a journalist I demand that they resign immediately if Magsino is not restored to her family posthaste and given a medal for living up to the highest standards of the profession.

I don't know if Magsino has gotten everything down pat. But it makes my blood boil that a journalist has to be made to live this way for no other reason than that she is doing her job. What in God's name has happened to all the media organizations that are supposed to promote journalism? Surely keeping journalists alive is the most elemental way to promote journalism? What in God's name has happened to the national media? It's OK that the provincial journalists are being threatened with extinction so long as their national counterparts can sleep the sleep of the smug?

What has happened to us as a nation? Have we gotten to a point where we are so powerless in the face of iniquity we just turn away and say there are more important things to think about? Have we gotten to a point where we've become so inured to injustice we just shrug our shoulders and say that's just the way things are? No citizen, man or woman, deserves a fate like this, deprived of home and hearth for being willing to bear witness to the truth. More so, no journalist, man or woman, deserves a fate like this, being hunted down like a dog, for having the courage to unravel the truth.

We can't prevent things like this from happening, let's stop calling ourselves a democracy. We can't stop things like this from happening, let's stop calling ourselves free.

Filipinos in Hawaii celebrate centennial

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

BIG ISLAND, HAWAII—ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago, at Honolulu Harbor, the 20th of December would have been just another day of ships coming and going. But at 3 o'clock that afternoon, a small crowd had gathered to witness the arrival of 15 Filipinos on board S/S Doric. Honolulu residents had seen other Asians before—Chinese, Japanese and Koreans—but not Filipinos. Amid the stares of curious onlookers, the 15 "Sacadas" (migrant farm workers) got off the boat and were transported the next day to the Olaa Plantation here on the Big Island, which is also called Hawaii.

The ceremonies organized by the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission mark the beginning of a year-long observance of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the 15 Filipinos. One of the pioneers, Marciano Bello, reportedly from Candon, Ilocos Sur, stayed on the Big Island after his contract expired and raised a family. One of his descendants is Lorraine Rodero Inouye, the first woman of Filipino ancestry to become mayor of the Big Island who is currently a member of the state Senate.

Actually, the 15 were not the first Filipinos to set foot on Hawaii . A few "Manila men" were reported to have worked in Hawaii during the time of the monarchy in the 19th century as cooks and musicians. Two were said to have petitioned to become citizens of the Kingdom of Hawaii. And at least six were known to be involved with the Royal Hawaiian Band, with one surnamed "Libornio" playing an important role.

But 1906 marked the beginning of an aggressive campaign to recruit young Filipino workers by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) to work on the plantations. Sugar was king in those days, and newly opened plantations were in desperate need of laborers. By the 1930s, the Sacadas had become the majority of the plantation workforce, replacing the Japanese. This caused some tension between the two competing ethnic groups. The Japanese, who came in the late 19th century, had been the dominant workforce until the Filipinos came.

The US annexation of two foreign territories—Hawaii and the Philippines—had a profound impact on the burgeoning sugar industry. Hawaii's annexation opened up additional acreage for sugar cultivation and producers were given privileges similar to those on the US continent. However, annexation also made American federal laws applicable to Hawaii, now a US territory. Two such laws, the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Foran Act of 1885, hurt the labor supply as hordes of Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese workers left the plantations. The planters' dilemma therefore was to find new sources of labor. The HSPA recruited "trial" workers from Puerto Rico, Korea, Russia, Spain and even India.

The American annexation of the Philippines on Dec. 10, 1898, making it a US colony, was a godsend to the sugar planters. This meant that as American subjects, Filipinos could be recruited without any immigration restrictions. A US Senate report in 1903 mentioned the vigorous demands of the planters for the creation of a government bureau of immigration for the purpose of "superintending the importation of foreign laborers and the introduction of immigrants."

A new era which would dramatically alter the ethnic demographic future of Hawaii had begun. As an American colony with a huge rural population, the Philippines immediately became the primary source of cheap labor for the plantations. Before 1920, the largest group of Sacada recruits came from the Visayas, where sugar was already a thriving industry. After 1920, HSPA recruitment was largely confined to the Ilocos where life was hard, the population dense and the land not productive for agricultural purposes. Ilocanos were the prime candidates for plantation labor because of their reputed traits of industry, frugality, hard work and simplicity.

There were a few Tagalogs, like Pablo Manlapit who came from Lipa, Batangas. He rose to become the Filipinos' most militant labor leader, leading strikes on the plantations for higher wages and better working conditions for his fellow Sacadas.

The lives of the early Sacadas were fraught with fear and insecurity. Ruben Alcantara, author of the first dissertation on the Sacadas, described their plight as consisting of 12 hours work on the sugar mill or 10 hours in the cane fields, interrupted only by a 30-minute lunch and occasional pause for water. "Long separation from their families, a scarcity of feminine companionship, feelings of discrimination and low status on the plantation labor hierarchy combined to place a heavy burden on the shoulders of these pioneer workers," Alcantara wrote.

Between 1906 and 1930, the HSPA had brought in nearly 120,000 Filipinos to Hawaii, and in 1946, the last batch of Sacadas, consisting of 6,000 Ilocanos, arrived in Hawaii. After independence, the quota was limited to 50 a year (later increased to 100). The Tydings-McDuffie Law had defined Filipinos as "aliens" subject to immigration restrictions.

Little did the original 15 know that today the Filipino community they started a century ago would grow to 270,000, comprising nearly 23 percent of Hawaii's population, the highest percentage-wise in America. Current immigration from the Philippines averages 4,000 a year.

That factor plus the usually higher Filipino birth rates in the state will accelerate the Filipino community's growth, making it very much a part of Hawaii's future.

Belinda A. Aquino is a University of Hawaii professor and director of Philippine Studies. She is also a member of the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission.

Infidelity and other diseases

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU FOUND OUT that your husband has not one but two mistresses—and countless other dalliances besides? Would you confront him and threaten to leave him? Would you investigate the other women and look into their arrangements with your husband, including perks like a condominium unit, a new car and jewelry? Would you come running to his parents and seek their help? Or would you instead look at yourself and seek to transform the face and body you behold into a more pleasing specimen?

Chona Chong (Zsa-zsa Padilla), wife of the philandering Elton (Jay Manalo) in "Ako Legal Wife," has tried all these tricks and more, not just to keep her husband's devotion, but also to prevail over her "rivals." There's the "lucky wife" (Cherrie Pie Picache) who not only brought Elton business success but has also borne a son, and the "latest wife" (Rufa Mae Quinto), who proudly claims to be "the youngest, the freshest and the best loved" of them all.

While multiple infidelity is no laughing matter, "Ako Legal Wife" certainly mines the situation for all its comic possibilities. The story is told mainly from Chona's point of view, played broadly, confidently and charmingly by Padilla. She carries the movie almost entirely on her own shoulders, turning the often-hysterical, histrionic and hilarious Chona into a sympathetic character. One could only wish that her character had been better written, or at the very least that she had been given less stereotypical courses of action.

***

RANGED against the tour-de-force of Padilla's performance, Cherrie Pie Picache and Rufa Mae Quinto end up as mere supporting characters. A steady and reliable performer, Picache manages some interesting turns, especially with her thick Visayan accent. It's Quinto who disappoints, for she is known to be one of our more intelligent comediennes but in this movie she seems strangely subdued, a pale version of her otherwise vibrant comic persona.

Almost stealing the movie from Padilla is John Prats, who plays Chona's oldest child and only son Hamilton, who is laboring under the stress of keeping his true sexual orientation a secret. This is a problem not just because conservative Chinese-Filipino families still consider it an embarrassment, but also because if it is discovered, his mother feels it will put her at a disadvantage with regard to the "lucky wife," whose son is about Hamilton's age and who could become the designated heir if Hamilton loses his place as the "No. 1 son."

It would have been so easy for Prats to turn Hamilton into a caricature, but instead he strives to portray the conflicted young man with subtlety and restraint, a sudden softening of his features, a curling of fingers, and a sudden light coming into his eyes when he beholds his high school crush.

Though the families in the movie are Chinese-Filipinos, the situation could very well apply to families without even a drop of Chinese blood in their lineage (admittedly a rarity in the Philippines). But since this is a comedy, "Ako Legal Wife" chooses to gloss over the more disturbing aspects of infidelity. Still, given how Philippine movies and soap operas have beaten this subject to melodramatic death, perhaps laughing at it is the way to go for now.

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I'D ONLY recently picked up a copy of "Story Philippines," a magazine published in oversized format that contains nothing but short stories, essays, poetry and visual art. (Even its advertisements look and read like art work!)

The issue I got (at A Different Bookstore in Eastwood) features an essay, albeit one that reads like a short story, by Gilda Cordero Fernando. "Losing Mac" is a reflection on aging and the ravages time and disease wreak not just on the body but on one's relationships.

It starts with an account of bringing back together her husband's old *barkada*, and then proceeds with an accounting of all their health problems that are forever on the periphery of their consciousness but which they determinedly ignore during their get-togethers. Then follows a recounting, in painful, harrowing detail, of her husband's own struggle with colon cancer. It is as much a scan of the narrator-caregiver's own coming-to-terms with this stage of life as it is of the patient's recovery.

I loved this part: "I read somewhere that the tragedy is not the love that does not last, but the love that does. In an illness, normal marriage problems magnify tenfold. When Dad and I were given each other, it wasn't playtime. Soon enough we realized that we were put on earth, among other things, to learn about patience and suffering and salvation. Husbands are the practicum in the life of women like me who have devoted so much time to meditating and cleansing and believing we're so damn spiritual. Wisdom, alas, is applied spirituality, nothing more, nothing less."

***

I DON'T know if it is just happenstance, but also in the same issue is a short story by Sarge Lacuesta, "The Life and Loves of Doc Dwende," that is told from the point of view of a "healing" elf, an elemental with the gift of healing human ailments.

But even Doc Dwende's gifts fail him in the case of the young daughter of a congressman, whose fatal illness the elf perceives as thick black smoke swirling about her insides. He knows there is nothing he can do for the girl, save perhaps to "look deep into her eyes and murmur incantations to calm her soul." And in the end, Doc Dwende realizes: "I am only beginning to understand how things work here, time and disease and all those things. What has only been a short chapter in my rock-steady life has been a lifetime for others. And for a moment I was lost in their world, where time is strange, and there are diseases that never heal."

Lessons for housewives of old

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

BROWSING THROUGH THE SEPTEMBER 1938 issue of the Philippine Magazine, an article by Maximo Ramos on "Secrets of the Barrio Housewife" caught my attention because it concerned food and its preparation. Thinking I could get some useful culinary tips, I read it—only to discover that the material is so dated it can be considered history.

At best, the article is of purely ethnographic interest especially to those who live in urban areas in the 21st century. For example, it states that when a pig, deer or goat is butchered, some of the choice parts are thrown out the window for the spirits to eat. If an even bigger animal like a carabao is butchered, the choice parts are placed on an offering plate and set on a table with a coconut shell bowl filled with drinking water to insure that the spirits are not left out of a hearty meal.

Most people don't butcher animals in their backyard anymore; they can select particular cuts, cleaned and wrapped in plastic from a supermarket freezer. The spirits must really be hungry these days, which may partly explain why things don't seem to go right in the country today.

The barrio housewife does not slap meat for fear that once insulted, the meat will get even by giving the diner stomach disorder. If she opens a coconut and finds it only partially filled with meat or water, she throws the whole thing away lest she grow bald. She doesn't tread on grain—that's bad luck. Common sense makes her wary about stepping on a chopping board (with or without a cleaver) lest her foot suffer the same fate as chopped meat. She does not sing or lie down near the stove because this will lead to either of two things: if she is single, she will marry a hare-lipped old widower; if she is a widow, she will be forced to marry an old troll for a second husband. Maybe I should tell our cook all about these outdated house rules.

We live in an age with microwave ovens or at least gas and electric stoves, so all the rules concerning firewood are obsolete. We have all kinds of fancy cooking ware, so there is very little use for the *palayok* or earthen pot except to add a nostalgic touch to a Filipino meal of *kare-kare* or *sinigang*.

Barrio housewives of old had many things to remember about *palayoks*. First, when cleaning this for first-time use, water is just used to rinse it, but the hand must not touch the inside of the pot lest it feels mishandled and retaliates by making all food cooked in it stale. If she finds sparks on the black bottom of the *palayok* while cooking, this is a sign that plenty of fish will come into her kitchen or that unexpected guests are on the way. When utensils fall from the table today, we check for gender: a spoon means a woman will come over, if it's a fork then it's a man. What about a knife, a teaspoon, or those fancy Victorian or Japanese inventions, like watermelon spoons, fish knives, strawberry spoons and those long drink spoons that double as something to mix or stir drinks?

Most people use rice cookers these days producing near perfect rice all the time. But I remember that my mother tried to avoid the rice cooker as long as she could, not because she was old-fashioned but because she preferred burnt rice found at the bottom of the pot or *tutong sa kaldero*. This acquired taste was looked upon with some amusement by her in-laws who never served *tutong* or *bangi* as it is called in Pampanga because this suggested that the host was so hard up they were literally scraping the bottom of the pot for rice.

Our rice cookers come with a plastic or wooden spoon that will not scratch the aluminum surface of the cooking pot. In the past, barrio housewives had to be careful about their choice of rice paddle. Common sense dictates that the paddle must be sturdy; not so common sense suggests that if it breaks while mixing or scraping, it will bring bad luck when the housewife leaves the house. If the paddle is used to tap the lid of the rice pot, it will bring misfortune in these forms: unexpected guests will appear at your doorstep, food cooked will dry up prematurely and, worse, the boat she will take next will sink. If the paddle is used to hit anybody, that person will go crazy, develop an ugly face and when this person dies, his face will turn black!

A rice ladle may be left in an empty pot provided it points to no one or else that wretch will be miserable for life. Thus, it is best never to leave a ladle in a pot. A ladle left standing in a pot with leftover rice or other food will cause the children in the family to quarrel.

Some of the tips explained what I thought to be strange decorations in a barrio house. For example, the spikes of the century plant used to be covered with empty egg shells. I thought this was done for aesthetic or *feng shui* reasons; actually it was meant to encourage all the other plants in the garden to flower. Crab or lobster shells were hung over doors and windows to drive away witches. These days we worry about *akyat bahay* and other criminals.

After cleaning a large fish, the barrio housewife would take the largest fins and paste these on a post to enable her husband to get a similarly big catch.

Reading all these today makes one realize how much we have changed in the past 60 years and, more importantly, how simple life used to be without our so-called "modern conveniences."

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

'Pamasko'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I MISSED MANG DENCIO WHEN HE DROPPED BY MY PARENTS' place this year.

For years, he had been our family driver until a stroke forced him into early retirement. But he's kept in touch all this time, visiting each year around Christmas with his wife to tell us about his life, the good times and the hard. Last year, he came alone, a widower.

Three years ago, I began to share his stories in my column because I realized how in many ways Mang Dencio was our Pinoy Everyman, and that his updates were, in their own way, a State of the Nation Address that none of our politicians (certainly not the one in Malacañang) could ever replicate.

When I realized I'd missed Mang Dencio this year, my first reaction was, "I wish he'd phoned in before visiting." But I could understand why Mang Dencio's visits are always unannounced. It wasn't a matter of his not having a cell phone; even if he did have one, I don't think he would have called before dropping by. I realized he has pretty much maintained the unspoken protocol about these Christmas visits, something which I appreciate. I also realized that describing this annual ritual of Christmas visits is, in a way, a State of the Nation Address, too.

Godparenting

As far as I know, it's only in the Philippines where the word for Christmas, the Spanish *"Pascua,"* has been used to generate a verb, as in *mamasko*, which Jose Villa Panganiban defined in his 1971 dictionary this way: "to call on or visit on Christmas Day or during the Christmas season. . . expecting to receive a Christmas present."

Many Filipinos think the *mamasko*, the *pamamasko* (the act of doing the *mamasko*) and the *pamasko* (the gift itself) are universal. Far from it. To verbally ask for gifts is considered unacceptable in most societies; yet in the Philippines, we've developed this practice to the extreme.

It wasn't always this way. I suspect that the *pamamasko* was, originally, an appendage to our godparenting system. Christmas was an occasion for godchildren, accompanied by their parents, to greet and spend time with their godparents. You didn't set an appointment for the *pamamasko*; your godparents were supposed to welcome the visit.

Alas, this changed over the last few decades. Instead of emphasizing spiritual guidance for the young, our godparenting system has become a tool for building political and business connections. These days, a child may have several dozen *ninong* and *ninang*, and adults can have literally hundreds of godchildren. Politicians were favored godparents, as the system mutated into something similar to the Sicilian Mafia and its godfathers. The *ninong* and *ninang* are there only in name; what we have today is a *padrino* system.

Extortion

Sadly, the corruption of the godparenting system has led to a corresponding trivialization of the *pamamasko*.

It used to be that the visits to godparents lasted several hours. It made sense when you only had two of them, as in my case. In those (ancient?) times, the *pamamasko* was a time for the godparents to ask how their godchildren were doing, heaping praise for accomplishments and expressing concern about less favorable developments. In my childhood, the Chinese *ninang* always went, "I hear you're a bookworm. You shouldn't read so much. You're so skinny. Here, *ninang* prepared this for you. Eat, eat more." In my young adulthood, the tuned changed: "You're not married yet? Your parents are old, I'm old. We want to see grandchildren."

Visits to my Filipino *ninong* were another matter. He was a well-respected judge (yes, there used to be many of them) who used the *pamamasko* to pass on a passion for books and music, as well as long soliloquies about life and, as I grew older, politics. He died too early, I'm afraid, and I sorely miss the wisdom that came with the *pamasko*.

These days, the *pamamasko* has become an ordeal of a game, the objective being to find and ambush as many godparents as possible in one day while for godparents, it's to dispense as many P10 or P20 bills as possible, like an automated teller machine, so the kids can be sent on their way.

The *pamamasko* has been extended beyond the networks of godparents, expropriated by politicians to build their patron-client relationships. Constituents queue for their *pamamasko* in a feudal welfare system: politicians extort from private companies gift packs which they then dole out to their wards, hopefully to make up for their neglect the rest of the year.

The saddest part about the *pamamasko's* evolution is the way it has been expropriated for government corruption, *hulidap* (hold-ups) to be specific. The police and traffic aides are particularly vigilant these days, hauling motorists and pedestrians in for the slightest infractions then greeting them "Meri Krismas," which is actually a euphemism for, "Give me a *pamasko* and you're off the hook."

I hear that authorities have banned immigration and customs agents from greeting passengers "Meri Krismas." And for good reason: while first-time foreign visitors innocently return the greeting from the agents, Filipinos recognize how loaded the greeting is, a suggestion that a *pamasko* will facilitate processing of papers.

Spirit of the gift

I sense, too, this year especially, how the *pamamasko* has become a barometer for the economic crisis. You can tell which offices have low pay from the way their employees come up front asking for their *pamamasko*. With companies that are doing well (this year, I heard of some giving as much as 18 months' pay), I don't get pestered as much by employees asking for their *pamasko*.

I'm all in favor of holiday tips and year-end bonuses. What upsets me is the way the *pamamasko* has become so thoroughly banalized. Just look at the envelopes left behind by your newsboy, garbage collector, security guards, PLDT messenger, Meralco messenger. Even our cable television messenger had the nerve to ask for *pamasko*, even if his services consist only of delivering the annual bill.

I wonder at times if it's just the economic crisis that's corrupting the *pamasko*. Perhaps the *pamamasko* only imitates our political life, including its wholesale extortion. What's destroying the *pamamasko* is not just poverty in terms of material deprivation, but a poverty of spirit.

But not all is lost. I think of Mang Dencio, visiting each year despite a very weak right leg, and bringing something from his backyard garden and apologizing for how small the gift is. I think, too, of the children of my parents' former employees, dropping in long after their parents have gone, to talk about how they've settled in and are raising their families.

Listening to the visitors, and looking at the satisfaction in my parents' faces, I realize the intention of the *pamamasko*—one which we need to restore—is not so much to ask for a gift than the visit being a valuable gift in itself.

LETTERS PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Wholesale political bribery

WE, THE MEMBERS OF CITIZENS FOR Constitutional Convention (C4CC) condemn in the strongest possible terms the proposal of the Consultative Commission (ConCom) to extend the stay in office of all elected officials whose terms are going to end in 2007. This proposal is, to say the least, indecent, self-serving and disgusting. How would one interpret this proposal other than as another form of buying the support of the incumbent mayors, governors, congressmen, and especially the senators, for Charter change through Constituent Assembly (ConAss)?

We likewise condemn the proposal to abolish the Senate and transform Congress into an all-powerful unicameral Parliament. A unicameral Parliament centralizes power in district representatives but does not provide for regional or state representation. It is, therefore, not coherent with a federal system. Thus, all existing federal systems in the world have bicameral legislatures.

We already said it before, a Cha-cha undertaking, under a President who is currently on survival mode, will not give us a constitution that will best serve the public good. We are having a first taste of it, courtesy of the Malacañang-created ConCom.

We would like to reiterate our position. We should change our Charter only after Gloria is out of the picture! Short of it, we will only have a much compromised, self-serving and hurried amendments. The country deserves more. In this context, we condemn the passage of the Constituent Assembly resolution in the Lower House.

On the other hand, we salute the steadfast commitment of the senators in rejecting the ConAss steered by GMA and Speaker Jose de Venecia. We are one with the senators in pushing for constitutional revision initiated by a Constitutional Convention. But the same should be undertaken only after a definitive resolution of the GMA's legitimacy shall have been arrived at. A Constitutional Convention is more participatory, objective and, therefore, credible, especially when the sitting President is not fighting for political survival.

—ABI AGUILAR,
media and communications consultant, Citizens for Con Con (C4CC), 2F CCS Bldg, Social Development Complex, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City

Abat has risked life for country

THE MANNER BY WHICH GEN. FORTUNATO Abat was detained by the Philippine National Police for allegedly having committed the crime of inciting to sedition reflects the administration's saddening utter disregard of the citizens' constitutional, civil, political and human rights.

A former commanding general of the Philippine Army who became defense secretary and, later on, an ambassador to China, Abat served our country with honor and dedication for several decades, risking even his life in various battlefields—during World War II and the Korean War, and at the height of the secessionist movement in Mindanao and communist insurgency.

While we may not fully agree with his actions, the current political dispensation, however, must recognize that he is a patriot who wants to see the country doing well, progressive and productive, sans the prevailing graft and corruption that permeates all levels of government today.

In the course of countering the political causes espoused by Abat, some administration officials have maligned not only Abat but also other retirees of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, by attributing to them negative labels such as senility, if not dementia; and portraying them as destabilizers. Such sweeping derogatory statements are not only uncalled for; they in fact fuel instability and tend to alienate well-meaning retirees who value their honor and dignity, and many of whom continue to serve the government in various capacities at all levels.

We, in the community of military retirees, believe we can and should continue to perform active roles in nation-building, within the parameters of the Constitution and our laws. We affirm that, as Filipino citizens, we have not only the duty but also the right to uphold the Constitution and the right to contribute our efforts, skills, competencies and resources to the causes of good governance, democracy, national security, peace and the general welfare of the Filipino people; as much as we have the duty and right to exercise these rights responsibly.

We, therefore, appeal to the entire citizenry, especially the media, to recognize the dignity and honor of the military retirees and respect truly the rights of Abat, an esteemed and well-respected comrade-at-arms.

—COL. MARIANO R. SANTIAGO (ret.), chair, for the Board of Directors of the Business, Industry and Retired Cavaliers Inc., Camp Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City

The President's inaction

THE PRESIDENT HAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

Illegal wiretapping is a very serious criminal offense. When a military intelligence unit wiretaps the private conversation of its commander in chief and then sells the recorded conversation, it behooves upon the chief to seek out the Judases for the serious breach of security and betrayal of trust, and bring them swiftly to justice.

If intelligence operatives can do this to their president, without fear of reprisals, how very little respect must these people have for the citizens they have sworn to protect? These people have become a threat to the Filipino nation. They must not go unpunished.

To our mind, the inaction of President Macapagal-Arroyo has put this country in grave danger. It shows she has lost her grip on the military. Her silence on the reported wiretapping has led us to believe she is being held hostage by the military.

It is the duty of the president to uphold the dignity of office he/she occupies, at all costs, whatever the consequences such an effort will have to him/her or to anyone. The exalted Office of the Presidency is far more important than the person occupying it.

—CESAR M. DE LOS REYES,
cesdlrey@i-manila.com.ph

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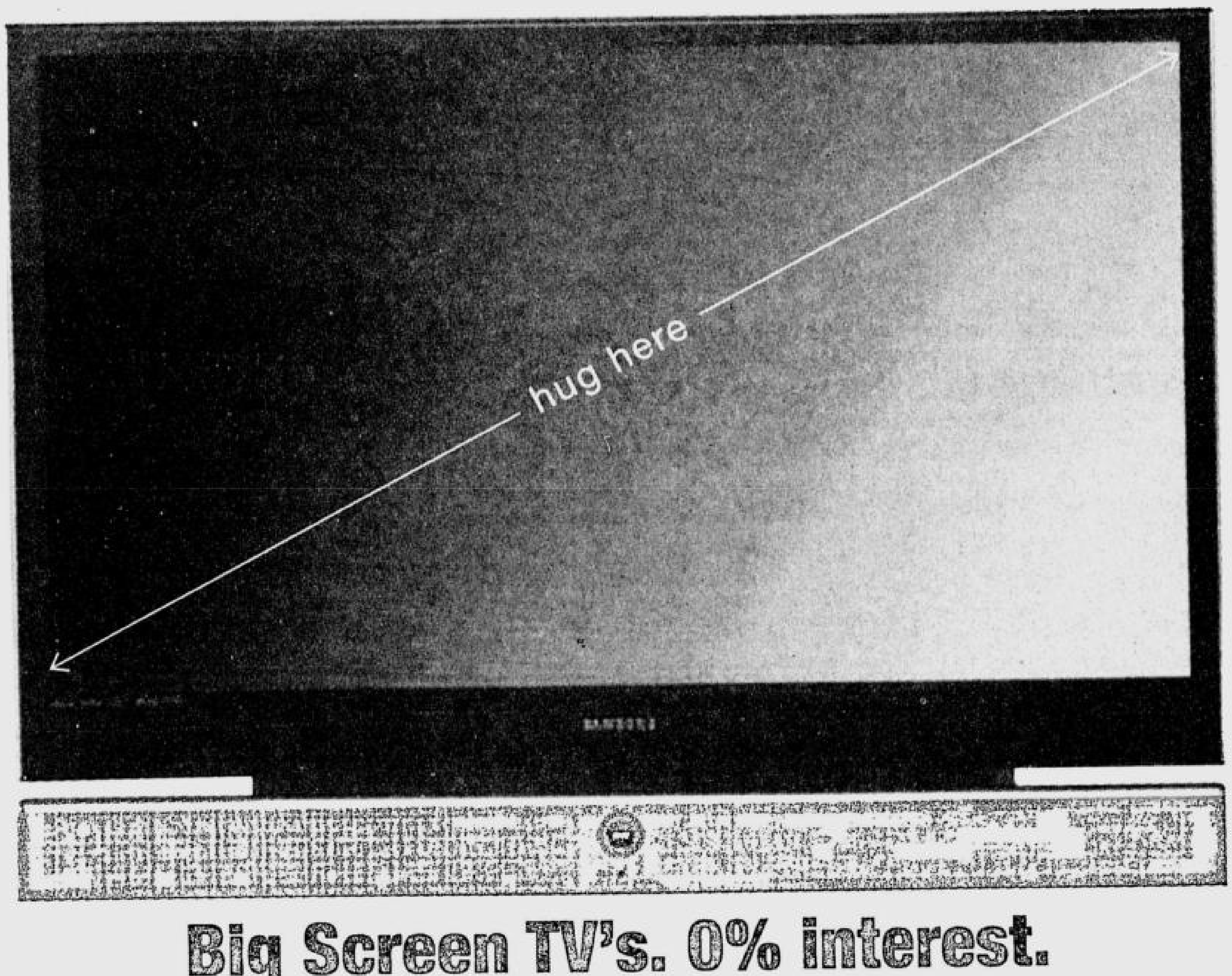
ABENSON

I'll be home for Christmas.



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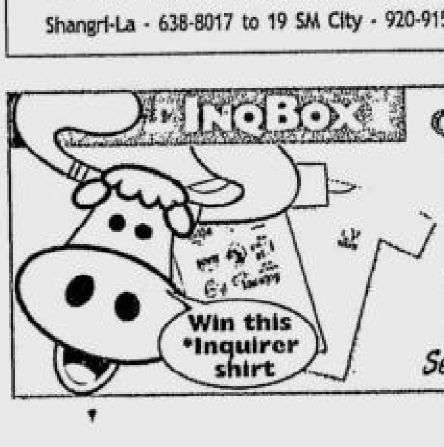

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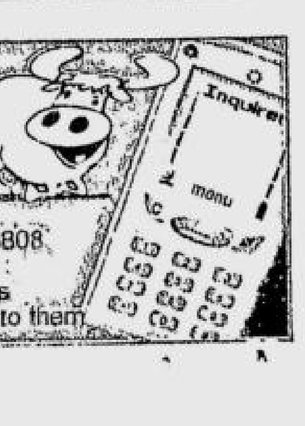

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

The day the Hawaii One-Five arrived

By Frank Cimatu
Baguio City

IT WAS ONE OF THE most publicized recruitment activities then in Hawaiian history. The "Pacific Commercial Advertiser," a newspaper in Hawaii, had been reporting about the mission of Alfred F. Judd, a lawyer of the Hawaii Sugar Planters Association, since 1906 to recruit 300 Filipinos to work in Hawaii for the sugarcane and pineapple fields.

FILIPINO migrants work in a sugar plantation in Hawaii. At left, two sugarcane workers pose in a studio. The photos are among the files of the Filipino-American Historical Society of Hawaii.

The Japanese had been giving the landowners labor problems and they decided that Filipinos were cheaper and more resilient.

In December 1906, the Advertiser reported that instead of 300 Filipinos, only 15, all from Ilocos Sur, were recruited by Judd, who stayed for seven months in the Philippines.

"Possibly not as good as the Chinaman or the Jap, but steady, faithful and willing to do his best for a boss for whom he had a liking," Judd said.

A friend of Judd's went to Ilocos Sur and brought in the 15 men to Hawaii. Most of them were recruited in Candon and nearby towns.

Five of them belonged to one family: Simplicio Gironella, 56, and his sons Mariano, 23, Vicente, 19, Francisco, 18, and Antonio, 15. The others were Cecilio Sagun, 27, and his brother Prudencio, 28; Mariano Cortez, 21, and his brother Celestino, 19; Julian Galmen, 20, Martin de Jesus, 22, Apolonio Ramos, 26, Marcelino Bello, 28, Filomeno Rebollido, 30, and Emilio Dasalla, 30.

Hawaiian historian Ruben Alcantara, in his article "1906: The First Sakada" published in the Amerasia Journal in 1982, said the bachelors were eager to go to the unfamiliar place because they could not afford the *sab-ong* or dowry for their brides.

On Nov. 18, 1906, they set sail for Hawaii aboard the SS Doric.

The day the Ilocanos arrived was cherished up to now not only in the Ilocos but in Hawaii.

Centennial

As early as three years ago, then Hawaii Gov. Benjamin Cayetano, the first Filipino-American governor in the US, signed Act 159 to create the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission (FCCC) with the help of the First Hawaiian Bank.

The FCCC's activities would culminate on Dec. 20, 2006, the centennial of the arrival of the "Hawaii One-Five (15)."

"It was on a Thursday noon, Dec. 20, when word spread in Honolulu that a ship was coming; the SS Doric was merely 20 miles away," wrote Alcantara.

"Boat day at Honolulu harbor was always a joyous occasion for the lei sellers, the boys who dived for coins thrown by the ship passengers and for the curious who eagerly awaited new arrivals. But this day was more unusual than ever for Judd was bringing the first Filipinos to Hawaii," he said.

Ilocos Sur Vice Gov. Deogracias Savellano, who heads the Philippine side of the FCCC, said of the Hawaii One-Five: "They called it Sakada Centennial Celebrations, the mother of all celebrations that would supersede Filipino affairs in the past.

"Hawaii's Filipino community is geared towards it. No less than 50 Filipino community organizations were deeply involved in the preparations for this gigantic affair. All have been assured that this historical affair would be a great event that will rekindle the historic economic struggles of the brave 15 Filipinos who arrived in Hawaii in 1906."

But when Savellano brought this to the attention of Malacañang, he said the response was not as enthusiastic. A Palace adviser even said the event was more provincial than national, Savellano lamented.

He said it was only when Filipino-Americans in Hawaii talked with President Macapagal-Arroyo that the National Sakada Commission was formed.

"The 100 years of the *sakada*'s struggle spell out the truth of Filipinos' significant participation in the economic, social and political development of Hawaii. It is worthy to note that Filipinos, a number of them belong to Ilocano families, toiled side by side with other ethnic groups to the rapid development of the island state of Hawaii," he said.

The Filipinos were taken to the Ola'a plantation near Hilo. They reckoned that the humid and rainy climate would be similar to the Philippines'. Other Ilocano farmers, most from Candon, would join the 15 in Ola'a.

Simplicio Gironella, the eldest in the group, was brought back to the Philippines after only six weeks in Hawaii because he had asthma.

His reaction to Hawaii was deemed as very crucial because his town-mates would rely on it, Alcantara noted.

Gironella brought with him knives, hatchets and souvenirs to entice his town-mates, and indeed the Ilocanos heeded the call.

Eventually, the original Filipinos would return to the country, except for Bello who died in Hilo in 1977.

Alcantara said that by 1946, there were about 110,000 Filipino men, 10,000 women and 7,000 children coming to Hawaii from the Philippines.

He said that in 1922, Filipinos already comprised 41 percent of all sugar plantation workers, with the Japanese a close second at 38 percent. But by 1932, 70 percent of all workers were Filipinos and only 19 percent were Japanese.

The last Pinoy mass migration to Hawaii

By Peter La. Julian
Cabugao, Ilocos Sur

THE LAST MASS MIGRATION of Filipinos to Hawaii started in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, when 1,523 young male Ilocanos left Port Salomague aboard the SS Maunawili on Jan 11, 1946.

They had been recruited to work in the sugar plantations in Kauai, one of the islands in Hawaii, then a US territory.

The Maunawili returned the following month and left with another 1,526 Ilocanos recruited for work in the sugar plantations in other Hawaiian islands. The steamship made two more trips that year, taking with her 2,919 more workers.

Another ship, the SS Falcon, also docked at Port Salomague for the same purpose on May 21, 1946 and left with 806 people, including 264 women and 511 children.

Families next

On June 19 that year, it returned, this time for the families of the first batches of plantation workers—182 women and 404 children, including a male adult.

That year, a total of 7,661 Ilocanos left the Ilocos to seek their fortune in Hawaii.

Among those who left here were Hermenegildo Barroga, then 17, of Bantay town, and Benjamin Jose, almost in his teens, of Laoag City. Now retired and pushing into their 80s, they live comfortably in Kauai and Oahu, respectively.

Barroga, who lives in one of the upscale subdivisions in Honolulu, told the INQUIRER in a visit in October 2002 that the "mass migration" could explain why there are many Ilocanos in Hawaii, outnumbering other Filipino immigrants there.

Petition

A 2000 census showed that approximately 170,635 Filipinos are living in Hawaii, 20 percent of whom are Ilocanos. Iloko is the lingua franca of Hawaii Filipinos, according to Barroga.

"*Tinawingmi dagiti nabati a kameng ti familiami agraman kabagianmi* (We petitioned other members of our families who were left behind including relatives)," Barroga, who served in the US Army during the Korean War, said.

He was able to bring his seven brothers and their families to Hawaii. They are now American citizens like him. A son is a Honolulu policeman, while a married daughter is with a US federal government agency.

In the case of Jose, he sent for his whole family—his wife, several children and relatives. A daughter, Naty, a former teacher in the Philippines, is married to a Nisei (US-born second generation Japanese.) Jose and his wife live in a bungalow in Lihue.

'Sakada'

Today, Barroga and Jose are among the few living *sakada* in Hawaii, who boarded the steamships in Cabugao in 1946. The word "*sakada*" originally referred to workers from Cebu, Negros, Iloilo and Capiz, who were also recruited as cheap labor in the plantations and arrived in the islands in 1909. The term stuck to refer also to other ethnolinguistic Philippine groups in Hawaii.

"In 1998, there were about 200 of us old-timers who would gather for celebrations and other Ilocano functions," Barroga said. He did not know the exact number of those still living at the time of the 2002 interview.

Jose and Barroga could be considered, along with those who left Port Salomague and the Visayan *sakada*, as the first overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

The first OFWs

But the honor as the first OFWs rightly belonged to 15 Ilocanos, led by members of the Gironella family of Candon, who arrived in Hawaii on the SS Doric on Dec. 20, 1906. They were the first recorded Ilocano *pukankein* (*pukankeyn*) or sugarcane plantation workers in Hawaii. ***(See related story at left.)***

The 15 Ilocanos, along with Jose and Barroga and other living former sugarcane workers, will be honored during the celebration of the Filipino centennial in Hawaii, which started this month.

In an e-mail message, Amado Yoro, publicity officer of the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission and a son of a *sakada*, said the yearlong celebration officially started on Dec. 10.

On Dec. 17, a *sakada* statue was unveiled at the old Ola'a plantation in Keeau, Big Island or Hawaii Grande, where the 15 Ilocanos first worked.

Santi Santissimo

By Elizabeth Lolarga
Contributor

CAREFUL NOW, WE'RE JUST A STEP BEHIND CANONIzing iconoclastic artist Santiago Bose, whose life and works were recently celebrated in a three-day multimedia affair at the University of Baguio's Dap-ayan Hall, courtesy of the Baguio Integrated Arts Guild.

Leading the festivities, Karlo Altomonte, the staunch keeper of Bose's memory, announced that the city of the artist's affections had finally come around to bestowing on him, posthumously, the title of Outstanding Citizen of Baguio.

Altomonte kidded that when Bose was alive, he wasn't keen on the award, disparaging it for being "not prestigious enough" and for it going to some suspect individuals who do not even trace their roots to the city.

Artist Kawayan de Guia installed a makeshift altar in memory of Bose in one part of the hall. The bamboo tent, which brought to mind R. Buckminster Fuller's geodomes, had picture buntings hanging all over, showing various Baguio and art personalities seated on the Santi chair. The actual chair, made to look like a death chair, stood at the center of the tent.

Among those whose pictures hung from the twigs were Bose's friends and colleagues—all, in some way, connected to the local art scene—Su Llamado, painter Bencab, sculptor Agnes Arellano, Café by the Ruins' Christine Arvisu, musicians Billy Bonnevie and Shant Verdun, cook-writer Adelaida Lim Perez, anthropologist Padma Perez, artists Inyong Geslani, Leonard Aguinaldo, Benjie Mallari and Kawayan himself, photographer Tommy Hafalla, Frank Cimatu flashing the Victory Joe sign, theater person Karlo, among others.

> The city of Santi Bose's affections has finally come around to bestowing on him, posthumously, the title of Outstanding Citizen of Baguio

A vat filled with salt stood not too far from the chair that carried Santi's picture. People stuck their lighted sticks of incense into the salt and paid their respects to the artist on his third death anniversary.

A *bulul* (rice granary god) wore a woven hat and carried in its arms a bouquet of wilting flowers.

Bose's essay, "Eyes of Gauze," was blown up to underscore the author's *ars poetica*. Later, in a performance by arts guild members, the lines were chanted:

"Time spent on art is not wasted. When one spends time with art, it is a time that is truly your own ... Art sets me free. It frees my mind from the control of the rich and powerful. I do not paint beautiful pictures for the rich to match their carpets ... When I read artistic books, listen to good music or see a good painting, I absorb the life of the imagination, a life without boundaries. That's what art offers, and that's why art matters."

Paul Gongora, head of the UB publications office and public relations department, paid his tribute like a fugue.

He said: "The music of his (Bose's) art is discomforting to many people. He always has something to say. He shares insights on what's wrong (with society). His wit reaches the audience with an electrifying jolt."

Gongora added that Bose's subjects are grounded in reality. "He lets the difficult situation happen as it should. He has a self-styled wicked sense of humor."

He noted that the artist viewed Baguio's growing urbanization as "a pain in the ass." Bose became critical of technology to the extent that he would cover his face with a sheet of white bond paper when he would have his pictures taken in front of monuments and tourist spots abroad.

In Bose's self-portrait painted on a door, Gongora observed that the subject's body was compartmentalized to reflect how the world had become full of specialists, not generalists.

But Bose was not afraid to use technology in his art to make humanity whole again. He was known for his use of varied media from cargo boxes, photocopies to volcanic ash.

The UB official warned of humanity falling flat of its expectations with the rise of machines. Bose sympathized with the visions of shamans, fortunetellers and seers, and dreamt of a world without boundaries.

"Art offered a world beyond boundaries," Gongora said.

Borderless world

Bose, like other people, wanted a borderless world, and yet there were entire territories ahead to be entered with visas. His dream was one world.

BOSE
PHOTO FROM THE 2004 BOOK "ESPIRITU SANTI"

Roberto Acosta, fine arts professor at the University of the Philippines Baguio, remembered a loquacious Bose who liked to talk about his backpacking trips to the US, Mexico and different parts of the Philippines, and his experiences are reflected in his works.

Bose, a graduate of fine arts at UP Diliman at the time of the First Quarter Storm, showed the social unrest of the times.

Acosta said he also showed his inventiveness in the variety of materials he used for his on-site installations, like the "Pasyon and Rebolusyon," which was shown at the Cuban Biennale. The artist drew from images of Spanish colonization, even Mexican history and folk amulets and incantations.

Acosta added that Bose, along with the late Roberto Villanueva, an artist who settled in Baguio, led in the use of indigenous materials for their art.

Bose also drew from his experiences as a Baguio boy, including the time he and his friends were harassed by American sentries at the Camp John Hay, leading the youngster to question US imperialism.

Most of all, Acosta said, Bose was irreverent. "*Kahit na sino, kaya niyang gawan ng loko.*" And as his famous mixed-media work "Free Trade" showed (on the cover of the book Vestiges of War), Uncle Sam is at the receiving end of his joshing.

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Group says Southcom scuttling talks

COTABATO CITY—A MINDANAO-WIDE NON-government organization lambasted Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan for accusing the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) of rebuilding its base and recruiting new members.

"Complaints by the Southern Command over alleged recruitment and training of over 4,000 members by the MILF are accusations that need to be threshed out, validated and verified with due regard of the proper ceasefire mechanisms and channels," the Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC) said in a statement.

It said that Adan's pronouncement was not only counterproductive but could potentially scuttle the peace process.

The MILF has repeatedly denied recruiting more men.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu admitted that they were "retraining but not recruiting."

Since the redeclaration of the ceasefire in July 2003, residents displaced by past wars could attest to having experienced relative peace in their own communities, while formal peace talks on the ancestral domain agenda is also gaining breakthrough and consensus-building, the MPC said.

It added that the respect given to the ceasefire clearly shows the sincerity and political will of both the government and the MILF with the support of Malaysia and the international community to finally bring the negotiations to a settlement.

"These are victories that we need to reaffirm, giving us reason to be more hopeful on what lies ahead in the coming year," it said.

The MPC said if indeed the Southern Command has solid evidence over this alleged repeated reports of recruitment, it should elevate this matter to the Joint Ceasefire Committee and let the ceasefire mechanisms work.

"The International Monitoring Teams, led by Malaysia, are in Mindanao to help us verify the reports. To do otherwise will not only be counterproductive but could potentially scuttle the peace talks," MPC said.

Instead of talking to media to expose all these accusations, MPC said Adan is duty bound under President Macapagal-Arroyo's administrative guidelines to take into paramount consideration the strategic value of the peace talks over any tactical moves by the military.

Bantay Ceasefire, an MPC group that helps monitor the implementation of the ceasefire, together with various peace networks, is willing to validate and verify these complaints. There are procedures and mechanisms that are already in place precisely to respond to this type of problem in the ceasefire agreement itself.

It also urged local government leaders and legislators to create and provide the needed support for the peace process in Mindanao.

"Our agenda is not for personal gain and glory, otherwise we could have asked the government to give us government positions," said Ghazali Jaafar, MILF deputy chair for political affairs. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Negros plans new program to keep docs from leaving

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE PROvincial government of Negros Oriental took another step to ensure that the province will not be left without doctors as the migration of government physicians to work as nurses abroad is expected to become massive next year.

The province on Thursday decided to offer a residency training program for surgery and obstetrics and gynecology at the province-run hospital, with its resident-trainee getting a monthly pay of P20,000.

Provincial Board Member Marcelo Adanza, principal author of the ordinance that provided for the program, said the ordinance authorizes the provincial government to hire private doctors with fields of specialization in surgery and OB-Gyn to act as consultants and trainers of in-house and resident-trainee doctors.

This will hopefully lure private doctors to the province-run Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital (NOPH) and take on the residency training program, which will be implemented next year, Adanza said.

The program is meant to fill the vacancies for doctors who have left for more lucrative nursing jobs abroad. This year, seven NOPH doctors left for abroad to work as nurses.

Dr. Ely Villapandao, the Integrated Provincial Health Officer of Negros Oriental, said he was anticipating that more government doctors will leave next year.

[illegible] ZAMOR

STEP BY STEP
A child walks barefooted in one evacuation center in Calapan, Mindoro which recently suffered from heavy floods due to continuous rains. Hundreds of families were evacuated as the floods rose.

Tanauan mayor's win nullified by Comelec

TANAUAN CITY—THE COMMISsion on Elections has nullified the victory of incumbent Tanauan City Mayor Alfredo Corona in last year's mayoral race and proclaimed his rival as the duly elected mayor.

In a 465-page ruling, the three-member 2nd Division of the Comelec voted 2-1 in favor of Sonia Torres-Aquino, who questioned the election results from 342 precincts of the 26 barangays in Tanauan City.

Torres-Aquino filed her protest a week after the local election board proclaimed Corona on May 13, 2004.

The decision, dated Dec. 22, 2005, was penned by Commissioner Mehol Sadain and concurred in by Commissioner Rufino Javier.

Commissioner Florentino Tuazon, who dissented with Sadain and Javier's decision, issued a separate 110-page dissenting opinion.

In its resolution on the election protest, the Comelec said it found that Torres-Aquino won by 3,102 votes over Corona.

The local election board had Corona winning by 3,741 over Torres-Aquino.

Interestingly, both ran under the administration party Lakas.

Corona, however, quickly branded the decision as totally suspicious and full of irregularities.

Through his lawyer, Sixto Brillantes, Corona filed an urgent motion to recall the "absolutely illegal, grotesquely indecent and totally unChristian" vote of Javier.

In the motion, Brillantes said while it took Sadain over a year to come up with his original decision, Javier only had two days to issue his judgment in favor of Torres-Aquino.

He noted that Javier was assigned to the 2nd Division by Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos only last Dec. 20 or two days before the ruling came out.

Javier's appointment at the division came after two other election commissioners, Resureccion Borra and Felix Brawner, inhibited themselves from the case "for still unknown reasons." *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Bus ride turns into bloody life-changing drama

By Dennis U. Eroa
Libre Sports Editor

EVERYTHING WAS NORMAL AS the air-conditioned bus left the Victory Liner terminal in Pasay City. Everyone expected the midnight trip, just as in the past, to be a smooth ride.

A mother and her three young girls sat in front of me. They were excited about spending the holidays away from the confusion of the city.

My seatmate, who wore a golden bracelet and a large ring, wasn't in the mood to converse. Perfect. I drifted off to sleep much like everyone else.

After some passengers alighted in Dinalupihan, Bataan, a voice from the back of the bus shouted: "*Holdap ito, taas ang mga kamay*(This is a holdup, hands in the air)!"

I was wide awake now and simply obeyed, knowing that any sudden movement could be misinterpreted as defiance. I knew what to do—I would hand over my wallet and cell phone and that would be it. Then we could all go home—safe and sound—to our families.

But there was a commotion. The man at the back of the bus became agitated and started firing his gun.

There were terrified shouts and the smell of gunpowder. Then my seatmate slumped on my shoulder.

He had been shot.

I found myself shouting instructions: "Let's go to the hospital. We have to help each other."

The driver made a U-turn and drove back to Dinalupihan hospital where a crowd of people met our blood-splattered bus.

Finally, an ambulance came. To my surprise, the driver did not move to bring the victims to the more modern James Gordon Memorial Hospital in Olongapo City.

The following morning, I went back to the hospital to check my seatmate who was hit.

He had two broken bones from the shooting. And like the rest of us, his spirit had been shattered by the reality that an ordinary day could become chaotic, a routine ride could turn bloody, and life would never be the same again.

Missing fishermen found after 3 days at sea

By Jani Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—TWO FISHERmen who were reported missing since Dec. 22 were found safe and sound in Barangay Minalonan, Maria, Siquijor province.

Maria Mayor Vicky Padayhag told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview yesterday that the fishermen—Emilliano Napalan, 46, and Ruben Monida, 37,—drifted at sea for three days until they were brought by strong currents and wind to the shores of her town.

Napalan and Monida, both residents of Barangay Asuncion here, left to fish on the morning of Dec. 22 but failed to return home after their pump boat, "Dongski," ran out of fuel during a thunderstorm while fishing in waters off Maasin City.

Padayhag said the two fishermen landed in Barangay Minalonan on Christmas Day. She said they ate their fish catch while drifting at sea for three days.

The mayor said the stranded fishermen were given shelter at the residence of her relative, Minalonan village chief Lino Padayhag.

She said the fishermen left Minalonan for Maasin at 9 a.m. yesterday and were given gasoline and provisions for their safe return to their families in Asuncion.

The two fishermen were first reported missing by their cousin, Frank Bandibas, a Maasin-based radio reporter for dyAB in Cebu, on Dec. 22. A search and rescue operation was conducted by the Maasin Bantay Dagat but the fishermen were nowhere to be found.

The two left to fish amid heavy rains experienced in many parts of Southern Leyte over the Christmas week.

In St. Bernard town, some 200 families in the villages of Mahayahay and San Isidro were forced to evacuate to the town's gymnasium on Christmas Day after floodwaters started to rise due to heavy rains on Sunday.

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias asked all municipal disaster coordinating councils to stay alert amid incessant rains.

Reports reaching the provincial disaster coordinating council said that a landslide has closed a newly repaired section of Maharlika Highway in Barangay Agaagas, in Sogod town, 78 km from here. Vehicles from Manila bound for Mindanao were advised by the Department of Public Works and Highways here to take the Baybay-Maasin route.

The national road leading to Pintuyan town on Panaon Island has also become impassable after the road was damaged by days of heavy rains, the report said.

ROUNDUP

Zambo City flooded

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Residents of at least six villages here spent Christmas in evacuation centers after flash floods submerged their areas. Francisco Barredo, city social welfare officer, said at least 93 families from Barangays Bolong, Manicahan, Bunguiao, San Roque, Sangali and Tugbungan were displaced by the floods. "Some of these families spent Christmas in elementary schools with only a few belongings salvaged from floods," Tugbungan chair Eddie Saavedra said. Barredo said at least 15 houses were damaged by the floods but no one was injured.

Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Police chief survives ambush

COTABATO CITY—The town police chief of Parang, Maguindanao cheated death during an ambush by armed men on Sunday. Parang Mayor Talib Abo said Senior Insp. Armando Mariga was driving the family van to the police station, along with his son, when fired at by the suspects. Mariga and his son were not hurt although the van suffered damages.

Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Village chair shot dead

ILAGAN, Isabela—A village chair in San Agustin town was shot and killed by a lone gunman while he was tending his store on Christmas Eve. Senior Supt. Percival Barba, Isabela police director, identified the victim as Armando Arsenio, 48, village chief of Calaocan. Barba said the gunman went to Arsenio's store at 8 p.m. and pretended to buy a pack of cigarettes, but he pulled out a gun and shot the village official. Arsenio died while being treated at the Cagayan Valley Sanitarium and Hospital in Santiago City.

Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Floods reach 2 Palawan towns

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Continuous rains over the past two days caused floodwaters to rise in the municipalities of Roxas and Dumaran but relief goods are continuously sent to these areas, said the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council. Relief workers have been riding a boat to reach the town and deliver relief goods. Meanwhile, a footbridge was constructed in Caramay, Roxas, which leads to the towns of Taytay and El Nido as the original 90-meter bridge was washed out two weeks ago due to heavy flooding. Communications have also been shut down in San Vicente town due to impassable roads that make travel difficult for telecommunications engineers

Jofelle P. Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

2 provinces judged best LGUs

ILLUSTRATION STEPH BRAVO

THE PROVINCES of Bohol and Oriental Negros shared the limelight in this year's 12th Gawad Galing Pook, an annual search for the country's most outstanding and innovative local government programs. The two local government units (LGUs) in the Visayas received the most coveted awards for continuing excellence (ACE) for sustaining a "culture of governance and excellence" through programs that consistently won recognition in the past years. The awards were handed out at the Ceremonial Hall in Malacañang with the heads of the two LGUs in attendance, including those of 18 others that landed as finalists in Gawad Galing Pook 2005. Among those chosen as outstanding programs by LGUs were Bulacan for its joint systems improvement in education project; Capoocan, Leyte for its program on gender and development; Concepcion, Iloilo for a program on harnessing synergy in integrated population, health and environment programming; Dauin, Oriental Negros for its coastal resource management program.

METRO

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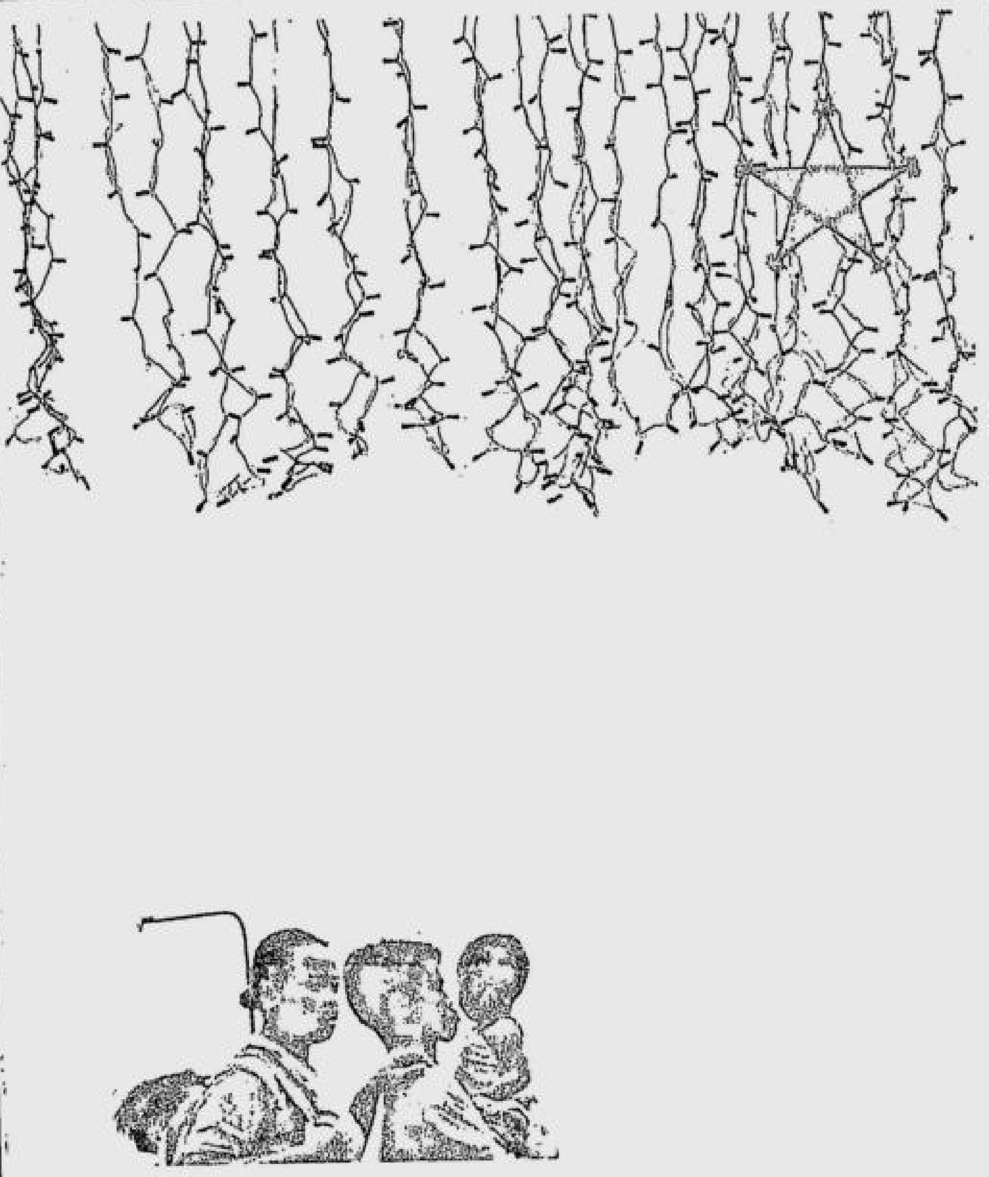

STILL IN HOLIDAY MODE
A family takes a post-Christmas Day stroll at the Baywalk strip on Roxas Boulevard, Manila. RAFFY LERMA

MMDA seeks return of police powers

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA DEvelopment Authority (MMDA) will appeal the Supreme Court (SC) ruling stripping the agency of its police power.

"That is not yet final. We will avail of legal remedies, and we may still file a motion for reconsideration addressed to the Supreme Court en banc," said lawyer Emmanuel de Castro, MMDA Legal Services chief.

In a decision dated Dec. 5, the SC's second division dismissed the MMDA's petition for the court to reconsider its earlier ruling which stopped the agency from issuing traffic violation receipts (TVR) and confiscating drivers' licenses.

De Castro said he received a copy of the decision only yesterday afternoon. "We will request the OSG (Office of the Solicitor General) to file the appropriate pleading before the Supreme Court en banc.. We have 15 days to file from receipt of our official copy," he said.

MMDA General Manager Robert Nacianceno, meanwhile, refused to comment on the matter, saying he has yet to read a copy of the court decision. Five Metro mayors, on the other hand, welcomed the SC ruling.

"(MMDA chair Bayani) Fernando must realize that there are limitations to the powers of the MMDA chairman, and these are clearly written in the law which created the MMDA. If he is really for the rule of law as he claims to be, then he must learn to respect the law," said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay in a statement.

Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad said the ruling was a "validation and confirmation" of the Metro Manila mayors' power to implement their own traffic codes in their areas. Mandaluyong City Mayor Neptali Gonzales echoed Trinidad's sentiments. "The chairman should now coordinate with the local government units concerned," Gonzales said.

Fernando had clashed frequently with some of the mayors who had insisted that they take the lead in implementing traffic rules in their areas, including the issuance of TVRs. The MMDA chair, however, had insisted on a single ticketing system with his agency as the lead implementor.

San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, who had a falling out with Fernando when the MMDA put up pink fences on his turf reportedly without his approval, said all parties should now follow the SC ruling. He said the previous set-up, in which the MMDA issued TVRs and confiscated licenses despite the presence of traffic enforcers, only led to confusion.

"Actually, the MMDA knows that it has no police power and that it is just a coordinating agency, said Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi. "Police power lies with the local government units as provided under the Constitution." Parañaque City Mayor Florencio Bernabe, on the other hand, said the MMDA still has a place in the city, but only in terms of providing support to local traffic enforcers.

As expected, Fernando's wife, Marikina City Mayor Marides Fernando, was quick to defend the agency. "The MMDA has been a great help to local governments like Marikina," she said. *With Jocelyn R. Uy and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

Heavy vehicles banned on C5-Katipunan flyover for now

By Leila B. Salaverria

AVOID USING THE C5-KATIPUNAN FLYover in Quezon City for now, especially if you're driving a heavy vehicle.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) issued this warning after a fire on Monday ate up homes built under the flyover, making the structure unsafe for buses, trucks or vans.

The load limit on the flyover was set at five tons, meaning only light vehicles like cars and jeepneys can use it in the meantime, according to director Robert Lala of the DPWH-National Capital Region office.

The usual load limit at the C5-Katipunan flyover is 32 tons.

Weak and brittle

Because of the fire, Lala said the concrete supports of the flyover appeared to have weakened and had become brittle.

The DPWH would be testing the flyover's integrity and undertake repair work in the following days.

"The damage to the flyover seems to be progressive. After the fire, we set the load limit at 10 tons, but had to change it to five tons because its condition continues to deteriorate. Small pieces of concrete were seen falling from the structure," Lala said in a phone interview.

Lala said that according to a rough estimate from DPWH officials, repair work on the 180-meter, six-lane flyover could cost P150 million.

The DPWH executive appealed to the public to follow its advice since it would be for their own safety.

Lala also said the department had written to the police and the Metro Manila Development Authority to seek assistance in enforcing the load limit.

The DPWH has also put up a sign on the flyover advising motorists of the reduced load limit.

The four-hour fire on Monday damaged around 300 houses under the C5-Katipunan flyover. A mother and her daughter were found dead after firefighters declared the blaze under control.

PNP creates task force vs hijackers

By Luige A. del Puerto

A TASK FORCE HAS BEEN CREATED by the police to go after hijacking syndicates.

The Anti-Hijacking Special Task Force, to be headed by Philippine National Police Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, was directed to draw up a list of the 20 most wanted hijackers in the country, the police said in a statement yesterday.

Anti-carjacking czar, Chief Supt. Augusto Angcanan, was appointed deputy commander of the task force.

Support

Top police officials met with businessmen on Monday to finalize the composition of the new body as well as to solicit the support of the trucking and delivery industry.

Some P42 million worth of cargo were lost to hijackers from January to December this year alone, police said.

Twenty-nine cases of hijacking were also recorded, including that of a Federal Express van in Dasmariñas, Cavite, this month carrying integrated circuits worth P300,000.

Two lawyers were assigned to assist the task force in prosecuting hijackers.

The drawing up of a database of truckers and truck helpers was also proposed as a quick response to hijackings in progress.

METROBRIEFS

P1.2M lost in Taguig fire

A FIRE gutted three houses and a seafood restaurant in Taguig City, destroying about P1.2 million worth of property before dawn yesterday. The blaze, which started at 3:45 a.m., was the 10th fire reported in southern Metro Manila for the month of December alone. Senior Insp. Virgilio dela Paz, Taguig City fire marshal, told the INQUIRER that the fire began at the Fishpond Restaurant at 303 Quezon St. in Barangay Lower Bicutan. It spread to three neighboring houses before it was put out by firemen at 4:38 a.m. The stay-in caretaker of the restaurant, Arnel Francisco, told arson investigators that the restaurant was already on fire when he woke up. "We still can't say whether there has been a short circuit... we are still reviewing the establishment's electrical installations," Dela Paz said. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

Organized Bus Route suspended

AFTER suspending the Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program (UVVRP) for the holidays, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday announced that it would be lifting the Organized Bus Route (OBR) scheme from Dec. 30 to Jan. 1. "[This is] in order to meet the demand during those days... because we are expecting that there would be more people on the road to shop," said Mon Santiago, head of the Metropolitan Road Rules Enforcement System and OBR operations supervisor. The MMDA also lifted the OBR from Dec. 24 to Dec. 26. Santiago said the agency decided to suspend the scheme so that those involved in its implementation, including MMDA employees manning dispatch terminals, could go on break. Implemented last October, the OBR placed around 2,600 buses plying Edsa under controlled dispatch, based on commuter demand on the road at a given time. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Message for the New Year

HOPING to save lives, a fire truck and an ambulance equipped with speakers will be going around the cities of Marikina and Pasig to make an important announcement. Their mission: discourage people from welcoming the New Year with a literal bang—using powerful fire crackers which could trigger fires, cause accidents or even claim lives. "We already have a public address system to remind our people who may have forgotten the dangers of using too powerful firecrackers," Pasig City Fire Station Chief Rodrigo Perdigon told the INQUIRER. Residents will also be asked not to burn tires or set off rockets, also known as "*kwitis.*"

MIKE TEST
MIKE TEST

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Burning tires can cause vehicular accidents as the thick smoke may blur the vision of motorists. On the other hand, *kwitis*, a firecracker attached to a long stick, which rushes upward after ignition, may fall on combustible materials and trigger fires. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

NBI probes jail break

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is conducting a parallel probe of the escape of three prisoners from the Bureau of Immigration's (BI) detention center in Bicutan earlier this month. "We are doing this upon the order of National Anti-Crime Task Force chief Angelo Reyes Jr. and based on the request of BI Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr.," NBI Special Task Force chief Regional Director Reynaldo Esmeralda said yesterday. Esmeralda said he and his executive officer Arnel Dalumpines will attend a hearing at the Department of Justice today to give the panel of prosecutors a background of the case. The panel was created to investigate those involved in the Dec. 19 escape of Sri Lankan national Jayamaha Mudalege Don Keerthi Jamayaha or "Keerthi," and Chinese suspects Tan Tin Shao and Go Sak Ping. The NBI official explained that Keerthi had been charged in the Office of the Ombudsman for the illegal deportation of Chinese kidnap suspect Zhang Du. *Margaux C. Ortiz*

Warning to car owners

THE MANILA City Council has approved an ordinance implementing the use of a device or system that would rid the city of illegally parked vehicles. The use of wheel clamps or a tire lock system to immobilize illegally parked and unattended vehicles, particularly in streets or areas designated as "no parking" or "tow away" zones, would make the city's traffic management system more efficient, the councilors said. The wheel clamp or tire lock is a yellow metal gadget or device placed on the front tire of a vehicle. Councilor Greco Belgica, principal author of the ordinance, said the system would also minimize complaints from motorists about traffic enforcers or abusive towing companies. Owners of cars that will be apprehended will be issued an official parking violation notice. *Tina G. Santos*

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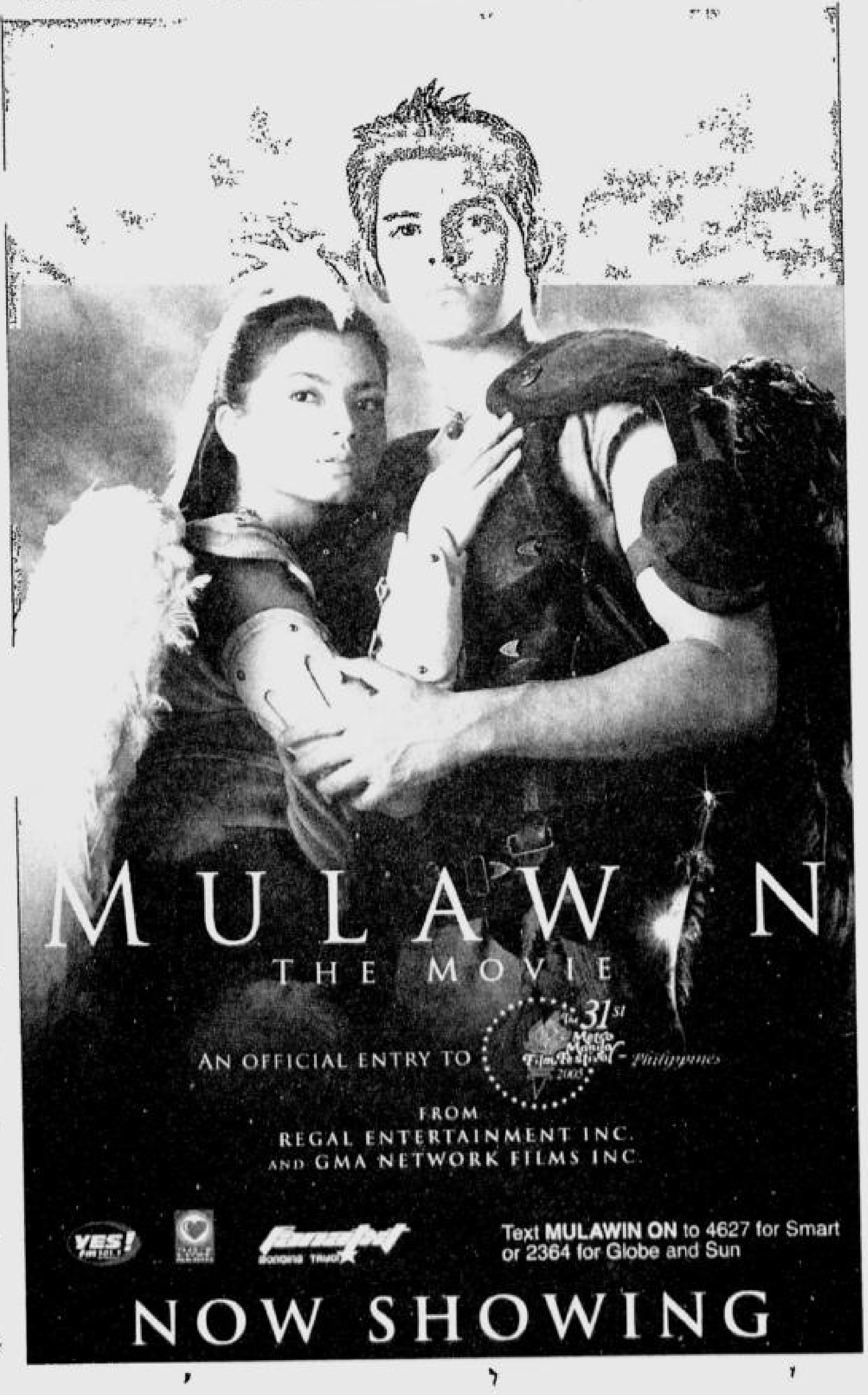
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Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**

BARANGAY Ginebra is preparing for another bruising encounter with Red Bull. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Knockout schedule keeps 4 teams busy

By June Navarro

THERE'S NO BETTER TIME FOR teams to strengthen their playoff chances other than the Christmas holidays.

Small wonder that four teams that are scheduled to open the new year with playoff matches have turned the Yuletide stretch—a span of time that teams normally consider as vacation period—into an ordinary work week.

Red Bull Barako, Barangay Ginebra, Talk 'N Text and Air21, squads which will dispute higher seedings going into the playoffs of the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference, began hitting the gym yesterday.

The Barako and the Kings are seeking to join the Giants in the semifinals outright with the loser in their Jan. 4 playoff falling to No. 3, an automatic seeding in the quarterfinals.

GAMES JAN. 4
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Air21 (playoff for fourth spot)
7:25 p.m.—Red Bull vs Ginebra (playoff for second spot)

"We can't afford to take a rest," said Ginebra coach Siot Tangquincen. "*Nakakatakot kalaban ang* Red Bull. *Binugbog nila kami* in our last game (Red Bull's such a fearsome opponent. They beat us in our last game)."

In the other clash, the Phone Pals and the Express dispute the No. 4 seeding and the quarterfinal slot that goes with it. The losing team will settle for the No. 5 position and meet the winner of the survivor round between Coca-Cola and San Miguel Beer in the wildcard phase.

"We can no longer avoid that (playoff)," said Phone Pals coach Joel Banal. "Our mind-set is to be ready for Jan. 4. Between Christmas and New Year, we're going to work hard and hope it pays off."

Air21 was actually the first team to register nine wins against seven losses before Red Bull, Talk 'N Text and Ginebra tied the Express at the end of the classification round.

"I'm quite frustrated with how things went," said Air21 coach Bo Perasol. "Still, we have to be in high spirits and sustain our intensity."

Coach Ryan Gregorio and the Giants, who topped the classification round with a 10-6 mark, will have a three-week respite after earning an outright ticket to the best-of-seven semifinals.

Aside from the Tigers and the Beermen, also keeping themselves in shape are the Sta. Lucia Realtors and the Alaska Aces. The Aces and the Realtors will meet in a best-of-three series in the wildcard phase right after all the playoff games.

No team, however, was more busy this Christmas than Ginebra. The Kings started practice two days after defeating the Aces on Christmas Day for the right to arrange a duel with the Barako.

Proving they mean business, the Barako have brought in import Penny James on stand-by, just in case Quemont Greer reverts back to his ugly habit of playing it easy.

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Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,539	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,094	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708 000	100,000	51 257	35 297	28 150	20 088	16 209	13 985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	87,039	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,466	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,910
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,653	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	885,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
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Riley concocts 'huge' idea to help Shaq

MIAMI—SHAQUILLE O'NEAL laughed at the idea: sumo wrestlers summoned to help make the National Basketball Association's most imposing big man even better.

Miami coach Pat Riley is talking about bringing in the massive participants of Japan's ceremonial- and ritual-laden sport to Heat practices.

"We're going to bring them in and have them lean on him and lean on him and we're not going to let him just back them in," Riley said. "And then he's going to have to take 100 jump hooks and 100 turnaround jumpers."

In Riley's eyes, there isn't much difference between sumo wrestling and the way teams defend his 2.16-meter (7-foot-1), 104-kilo (340-pound) center. Sumo matches between sumotoris dressed in mawashis typically last 10 to 15 seconds, with two massive men pushing and shoving, trying to knock the other from a circular area.

Defending Shaq is essentially the same concept.

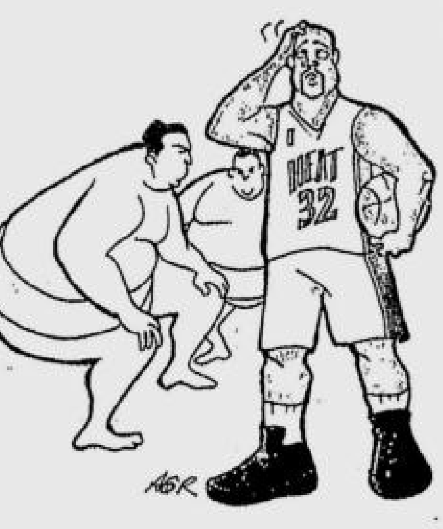
"The only ways for teams to keep Shaquille from getting good position is to hold him and to grab him," Heat center Alonzo Mourning said.

Opposing post players often keep at least one arm and often both—plus elbows—in his back, using every bit of leverage they can muster from their 79-kilo (260-pound) bodies to keep him away from the basket. If O'Neal defended in a similar fashion, bodies would fly and he'd spend most games entirely sidelined with foul trouble.

"You can't stop him," Hawks center John Edwards said last week after O'Neal scored 28 points in only 24 minutes against Atlanta.

Riley divulged his plan Sunday, after the Heat beat Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers 97-92—a game where O'Neal struggled a bit offensively, shooting 8-of-18 against the likes of Chris Mihm and Kwame Brown and finishing with 18 points.

His comment wasn't designed to express displeasure with O'Neal. Instead, it was borne out of the long-standing frustration Miami has with the way teams defend their behemoth center, perhaps the most physically imposing man to play the game.



The worst-kept secret in the NBA might be this: O'Neal cannot get away with the same tactics teams use against him, even though the rule book states that "contact initiated by the defensive player guarding a player with the ball is not legal. This contact includes, but is not limited to, forearm, hands, or body check."

"I'm sure that everybody will say that I'm just up here trying to complain, but I don't see how he could ever get to the basket," Riley said. "I don't care if he's 340 pounds (104 kilos). They get locked into such a defensive position that they just hold him, impeding his progress. But he's got to find a way to get around that."

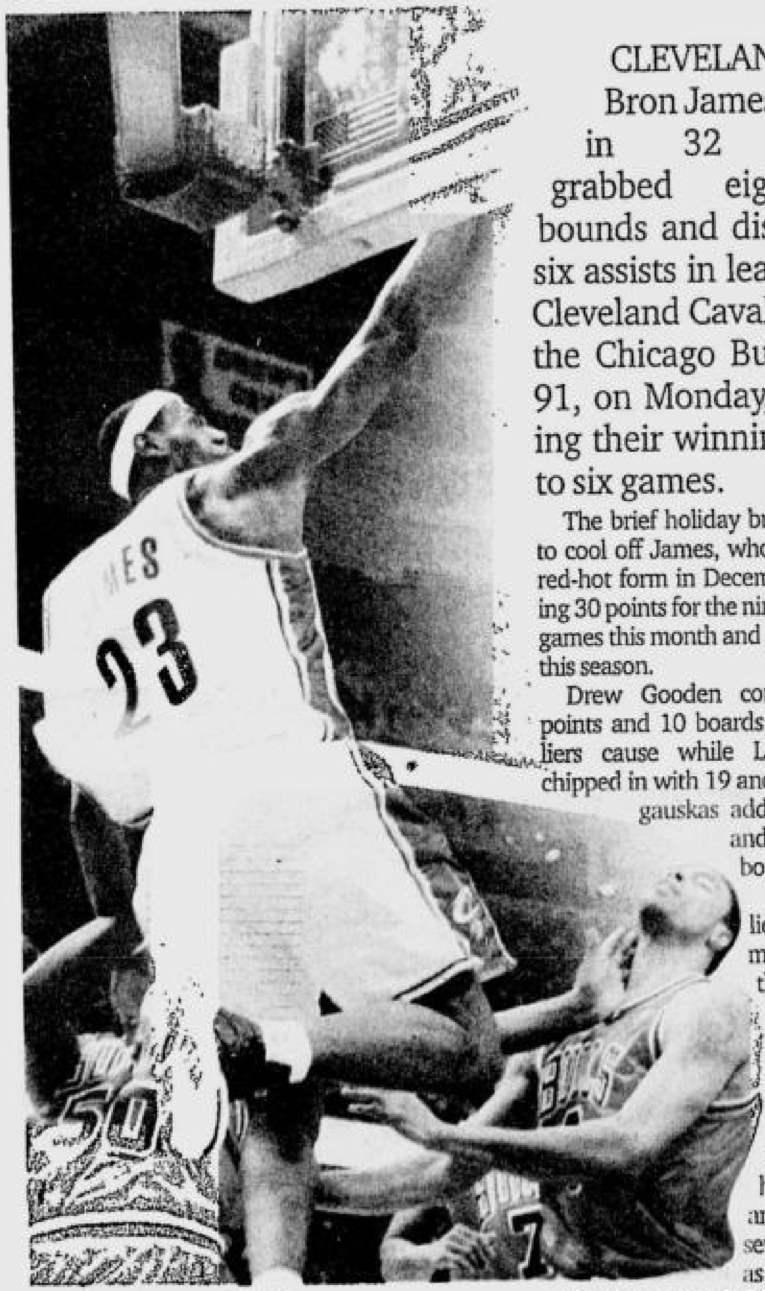
Unless Riley is serious and finds some of the biggest sumotori out there, O'Neal probably won't be facing anyone bigger or stronger than him anytime soon. At a recent major tournament in Japan, the average weight of a sumo was 104 kilos (341 pounds)—about what O'Neal checks in at.

O'Neal is averaging 18.4 points and 9.6 rebounds, both off his 22.9-point, 10.4-rebound pace of his MVP-runner-up season a year ago.

"Remember, I've only been back a couple weeks," he said, referring to the 18 games he missed with a sprained ankle this season. "I'm still getting there. Not there yet. I'll get there." *AP*

Cavs are on a roll

James tows Cleveland to 6th straight win



JAMES: All around brilliance

REUTERS

CLEVELAND—LEBron James poured in 32 points, grabbed eight rebounds and dished out six assists in leading the Cleveland Cavaliers past the Chicago Bulls, 102-91, on Monday, extending their winning streak to six games.

The brief holiday break did little to cool off James, who has been in red-hot form in December, surpassing 30 points for the ninth time in 12 games this month and the 16th time this season.

Drew Gooden contributed 20 points and 10 boards to the Cavaliers cause while Larry Hughes chipped in with 19 and Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 10 points and 14 rebounds.

The Cavaliers took command 27-21 in the opening quarter and led 55-45 at the half.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas hit 34 points and grabbed seven rebounds as Wizards rallied past the Los Angeles Lakers, 94-91, for their third straight win.

In New York, Vince Carter poured in 27 points and Richard Jefferson added 23 as the surging New Jersey Nets eased past the slumping Knicks, 109-101, for their sixth consecutive win.

In Orlando, Steve Francis nailed 21 points as the Magic broke out of a four game losing skid with a 108-93 win over the Milwaukee Bucks.

In Minneapolis, Boris Diaw sank career-high 31 points and pulled down 11 rebounds while Steve Nash had 24 points and dished out 12 assists as the Phoenix Suns burned the Timberwolves, 103-89.

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 23 points, including 11-of-11 from the foul line, as the Mavericks stampeded past Indiana, 102-80.

In Salt Lake City, Andrei Kirilenko drained a season-high 24 points and snared 14 rebounds, directing the Utah Jazz to a 105-102 win over the Memphis Grizzlies.

In Sacramento, Zach Randolph had 22 points and grabbed nine rebounds to power the Portland Trail Blazers to a 105-92 victory over the Kings.

In Seattle, the SuperSonics had six players in double figures to beat the Boston Celtics, 118-111.

In Oakland, Carmelo Anthony scored 28 points, Andre Miller added 21 and dished out 11 assists and Marcus Camby had 18 points and grabbed 15 rebounds as the Denver Nuggets fought off the Golden State Warriors, 118-112. *Reuters*

- **NBA on TV:** Indiana vs San Antonio (9:30 a.m. Sports Plus) and Sacramento vs LA Clippers (11:30 a.m., Solar Sports).

Injuries put Safin, Nadal out of action

PERTH, AUSTRALIA—DEFENDING CHAMPION Marat Safin is likely to miss this years Australian Open after failing to recover from tendinitis in his right knee, tournament director Paul McNamee said Tuesday.

McNamee confirmed Safin had pulled out of the warm-up mixed teams Hopman Cup event starting here on Friday and there were serious doubts that he would be fit for the Open, which starts in Melbourne on Jan. 16.

"It would have to be a race against time for Marat now," McNamee said.

In New Delhi, India, Spanish tennis star Rafael Nadal—ranked second in the world—has pulled out of next month's Chennai Open in India because of a foot injury, a newspaper said Tuesday.

Nadal, who won the French Open in June, would be replaced by Croatia's Ivan Ljubicic, the Hindu newspaper reported, quoting organizers of the tournament.

Ljubicic is ranked ninth in the world and got a wild-card entry into the six-day tournament, starting Jan. 2 in the southern Indian city of Madras—also known as Chennai.

"It is with a heavy heart I am announcing my inability to play," the report quoted Nadal as saying in a statement.

Nadal's withdrawal was a big blow to the tournament, which is also meant to raise funds for tsunami victims in southern India. The Dec. 26 disaster last year claimed more than 8,000 lives and left tens of thousands homeless in Tamil Nadu state, of which Madras is the capital.

Nadal, however, announced that he would contribute to US$25,000 to the state government's main relief fund.

Safin's knee injury also forced the big-hitting Russian out of last month's season-ending Masters Cup in Shanghai.

Also doubtful for the Australian Open is Maria Sharapova. The 18-year-old, now ranked fourth in the world, has withdrawn from the Australian Women's Hardcourt tournament at Queenslands Gold Coast starting on Jan. 1.

She is suffering from a strain to her right shoulder and has returned to her base in the United States, rather than coming directly to Australia, which McNamee said was not an encouraging sign. *AFP, AP*

Matsui picks Yankees over Japan

TOKYO—NEW YORK YANKEES OUTfielder Hideki Matsui has decided against joining Japan's squad at the 16-nation World Baseball Classic next March, a Japanese baseball official said Tuesday.

Matsui told Japan squad manager Sadaharu Oh late Monday he would sit out the tournament, according to Hiroshi Kimura, a spokesman for the manager's team, the Fukuoka Daiei Hawks. Kimura said he could not elaborate.

Kyodo News agency quoted the slugger as saying he wanted to concentrate on his role in the Yankees.

"The reason I decided to go to the United States was to try and become a world champion with the Yankees, and I fear that chasing two goals might get in the way of that dream," Kyodo quoted Matsui as saying in a statement released by the major league team. *AP*

Bad news for rivals: Tiger may still be peaking

ST. PETERSBURG—THE HAIRLINE UNDER his Nike cap is receding, and the aches and pains from years of pounding golf balls are more apparent. It used to be nothing for Tiger Woods to train by running 6 to 10 miles, then doing it again the next day.

"Now I need another day off," he said.

Ah, Tiger is getting old.

He turns 30 on Friday.

And next month, he will begin his 10th full season on the PGA Tour.

But that hardly suggests any sort of drop-off is imminent. Woods, who is coming off a six-victory season that saw him win two major championships, knows all about golf history.

"If you look at most of the guys' careers, it looks like their peak years are in their 30s," Woods said recently at the Target World Challenge in Thousand Oaks, Calif. "Hopefully that will be the case for me. Hopefully my 30s will be better than my 20s. That would be pretty neat to have happen."

And it would be pretty amazing. Because Woods put together in his 20s a run of excellence that has been surpassed by only six players in PGA Tour history during their entire careers.

Wood's 46 official wins rank seventh behind Sam Snead, Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Byron Nelson and Billy Casper.

Woods' 10 major championships trail only Nicklaus' 18 on the preceding list. Walter Hagen, who won 44 times, captured 11 majors.

"If I play the way I know I can play, I think I can get there," Woods said. "But I have a lot of work ahead of me, and a lot of things I need to do to make myself peak at the right times and get all the things coming together like I did this year. This year, I put all the pieces together at the right time, four straight times."

Not only did Woods win the Masters and British Open in 2005, he contended at the US Open, where he finished second by two shots to Michael Campbell, and at the PGA Championship, where he tied for fourth, two shots behind Phil Mickelson.

Although Woods pointed out that the competition is better than ever, he hits his 30th birthday as the undisputed No. 1 player in the world.

WOODS: Best yet to come

And because golf is a game that allows players to prosper into their 30s and even their 40s, there is reason to believe his greatness can be sustained.

Nicklaus, who won 30 times before turning 30, enjoyed his greatest stretch after turning 31. From 1971 to 1973, Nicklaus won 19 times, including four majors. Nicklaus also won six majors after turning 35, including three after turning 40. One was the 1986 Masters, when Nicklaus was 46.

"How do you compare what he's doing, because nobody has ever done what he's doing," Nicklaus said this year. "He's dominated way beyond how anybody's ever dominated."

Woods still hits the ball a mile, averaging 316 yards off the tee to rank second on the PGA Tour. But he also has an excellent short game, is a clutch putter and excels at course management.

That is the biggest difference from the player who turned pro at age 20 in 1996 at the Greater Milwaukee Open.

"I had a lot of holes in my game," he said. "I wasn't a very good driver of the golf ball. My distance (control) was terrible with the short irons. I would fly it over a bunch of greens. And my putting was way too aggressive. I had holes in my game that I needed to rectify in order to be consistent week in and week out.

"All the great champions that have ever played, that's what they did. I didn't think my game was good enough to come out on tour to do that week in and week out, so I needed to make changes."

Woods has twice revamped his game. He did so in 1997 after winning the Masters, and the changes did not kick in until 1999. After winning seven of 11 major championships through the 2002 US Open, he went through another change that saw him win just once in 2004 but rebound this year.

And yet there is still room for improvement. Woods ranked 188th on the tour this year in driving accuracy, hitting just 55 percent of the fairways.

Palmer is one who believes Woods will learn to manage his strength.

"Between now and 35 could be the absolute best years of his life," Palmer said. "It would be very easy for that to happen, meaning that he could double or triple what he has done in the past." *AP*

Wishes

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

WITH THE NEW Year just around the corner, I thought I'd ask friends and associates in the sporting community what they hoped to accomplish in 2006.

Like me, I'm sure you'll find their response most interesting.

Let's start with PBA Commissioner Noli Eala. For the PBA, Noli said he hopes to be able to bring in 1 to two more teams by next season and sustain growth in attendance and television ratings.

For Philippine basketball, Noli wants to significantly contribute to the unification of all parties concerned, with the objective of having the Fiba ban on the Philippines lifted.

"Finally, I want to promote the growth and popularity of traditional boat racing in the Philippines as it becomes a regular Olympic sport," Noli said.

Why the interest in boat racing? According to the PBA chief, he has been rowing competitively for almost a year now and has personally experienced the excitement, practicality and adaptability of the sport for Pinoys.

* * *

Another championship for Ginebra, the launching of his book and his shooting camp, are Allan Caidic's three targets for year 2006.

Still in the works, the book is Allan's biography, co-authored by scribe Tito Talao and yours truly. On the other hand, the shooting camp, where Allan plans to teach his personal shooting techniques and philosophy, is a first of its kind here in the Philippines, if I'm not mistaken.

* * *

Talk and Text Governor Ricky Vargas' list of want-to's is long.

"My personal stretch goals for 2006 are: 1) to lose 10 lb; 2) Find time to go to the spa; 3) Have more time with Julia (Ricky's grand daughter); 4) Learn how to sing and dance; and 5) improve my golf."

"All these I hope to accomplish while maintaining excellent performance at work. In short, I hope to become Superman," Ricky said.

(Note: No question about the possibility of all the items listed above except no. 4. I think it's a little too late for that.)

* * *

In business, Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero said he hopes to increase his company's market share from 80 to 95 percent nationwide.

"In sports, I hope to win a PBL championship, an NBC title, and a third straight championship for the La Salle-All-Star alumni team. Hopefully. I could also sponsor and manage a strong national men's team, that will compete in the 2006 Asian Games or 2007 Southeast Asian Games," Mikee added.

* * *

His aging players perpetually plagued by various injuries, Sta. Lucia team manager and governor Buddy Encarnado's fondest wish for 2006 is a healthy, injury-free Realtors crew.

"Which hopefully would facilitate a second championship," Buddy said.

* * *

The much beleaguered BAP secretary general Graham Lim continues to stand firm like the rock of Gibraltar.

"My objective for 2006 is to continue what we had done in the past—what we had started. We will not allow any entity to control the association nor to interfere and intervene in its affairs. I hope my detractors se the light and repent for the harm they have done me," Graham said.

* * *

"I don't know what I can accomplish next year. It's up to the powers that be," said SEAG national training director Mike Keon, who announced his projected 'disappearance' from the scene to the media in Hong Kong last week,

Mike said he has achieved his long-term goal (ever since Gintong Alay) of winning the SEAG overall title. And he is proud of this.

"If they are looking at the Asian Games, that's an entirely different ballgame, a whole new level. If ever, the focus should be on real Olympic sports. I don't know I can't make plans without directions from the bosses. It's all up to them," said Mike who is set to go on a long, secret vacation only he knows where—to recharge and reduce.

Mike said he went low bat and got fat during the SEAG. He promised to lose 40 lb in 4 to 6 weeks when he returns to civilization.

* * *

"Better health for me, my family and friends, and more new teams for the Philippine Basketball League. Also, a final resolution for the country's basketball conflict," said the PBL's Butch Maniego whose friends banded together to stage a fund-raising activity for him yesterday.

Butch is currently undergoing dialysis and is due for a kidney transplant.

Laylo stuns female GM, shares third round lead

SINGAPORE—FILIPINO NATIONAL Master Darwin Laylo stunned former World Junior champion WGM Humpy Koneru of India Tuesday to share the lead in the third round of the 2005 Singapore Masters and Challengers International Open Chess Championships at the Hotel Royal in Newton Road here.

Laylo, the 2004 National Open champion, climbed to a perfect 3.0 points with top seed super GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili of Georgia and 9th seed GM Wu Shaobin of Singapore.

The 27th-seed Laylo of Marikina City needed 66 moves of an English Opening to beat No. 6 seed Koneru by time forfeit.

Azmaiparashvili downed fellow GM Viktor Varavin of Russia in 45 moves of an English Opening while Wu beat Singapore-based IM Luis Chiong IV of Antique via a technicality after Chiong's mobile phone rang during their game.

IM-candidate Oliver Dimakiling thwarted defending champion and No. 7 seed GM Susanto Megaranto of Indonesia after 47 moves of a Ruy Lopez Opening to lead a big group of 2.5 pointers that include last year's co-champion No. 4 seed GM Mark Paragua, No. 11 seed GM Nelson Mariano II and IM Richard Bitoon. Bunched with the Filipinos were No. 2 seed GM Ni Hua and No. 3 seed GM Zhang Zhong of China, IM Jason Goh of Singapore, IM Gur Mittleman of Israel, FM Tirto of Indonesia and Bao Quang of Vietnam.

Paragua drew with Tirto after 27 moves of a Queen's Gambit Accepted; Mariano beat IM Pham Chuong of Vietnam after 33 moves of a Sicilian-Closed; and Bitoon halved the point with Zhong. Goh drew with Hua; Bao whipped countryman Nguyen Hong Ly after 28 moves of a Sicilian Skirmish; while Mittleman drew with 12-year-old Filipino whiz FM Wesley So. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

5 Asiad, 75 SEAG golds; breakthrough in Beijing

PSC master plan needs help of gov't agencies, says Ramirez

By Jasmine W. Payo

RAMIREZ

EXPECT A MORE SCIENTIFIC NATIONAL sports program next year.

At least that's what Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez vows to achieve after presenting the government's five-year sports master plan called the "RP Unified Sports Program."

"We need to have a more scientific approach in sports," said Ramirez. "The PSC will focus on the development of the country's elite athletes.

"We will identify the athletes who will be given foreign training and exposure. But the PSC will also be working with several lead agencies in other programs."

Among the government institutions tapped were the Department of Education (DepEd), which will work on the sports development and talent identification program at the grassroots level.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) will handle the training pool candidates from tertiary school competitions such as the University Athletic Association of the Philippines, National Collegiate Athletic Association, Private School Athletic Association and the University Games, among others.

The Department of Interior and Local Government will focus on the identification of elite athletes from the Philippine National Games.

"The PSC has two focal points," he said. "First is the responsibility of putting up a unified grassroots program through DepEd, CHEd and DILG. Second is to put more time and effort in training athletes to get the gold."

The plan identifies major targets in the first three years—five to 10 gold medals in the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, in December 2006; at least 75 golds in the Southeast Asian Games in Bangkok, in December 2007; and the country's first Olympic gold in Beijing in August 2008.

"The Philippines is missing a lot," said Ramirez. "In China, for example, they have a scientific talent identification program. We have no scientific way of measuring the physiological aspect of a young athlete, if, say, this child could be a future champion in tennis or swimming. Hopefully, we can have that."

"But we're also concerned with the education of our athletes," he added. "They should realize that they cannot play forever."

Secretary Angelo Reyes knows this brat?

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

THE MAN, ROTUND AND GRAY, SAID HE was the barangay chair we had accused of turning a crazy, choked stretch after the Lambingan Bridge in Sta. Ana, Manila, into a devil's gymnasium.

He identified himself as Laying Espinosa.

He didn't deny the charges, carried in this column last week, about the shameless malpractice.

But, in defense of his crime, Espinosa wondered out loud what would happen if he didn't accept bribes and obeyed the law.

Easy. He would readily lose a private piggy bank, filled daily by jeepney drivers to whom he allows the use of an illegal route, which also serves as terminals that regularly clog traffic in the area.

Easy. There would be sanity, law and order, and Espinosa would be unable to harass drivers plying the Vergara-Kanto route who have acquired lawful passage through the stretch, although still victimized by the mulcting barangay chair.

* * *

Actually, Espinosa had shown up and appealed to this reporter like a true gentleman.

He came to my place on Friday to straighten out matters with officers of the Vergara Drivers Association.

After confirming that he indeed allowed unlawful passage through the route covered by his barangay, he agreed to a meeting with the officers of the drivers association.

Time was set at 5 p.m. last Monday.

Like a true gentleman, the officers of the association gathered and waited.

This is already 5 a.m. of Tuesday and we've no choice but to give up on the gentleman barangay chair.

* * *

For a review of things, here's that portion of the column that sent Espinosa running for help:

This is not to dare Mayor Lito Atienza, but we've to report here that his power and effectiveness as the chief executive of the City of Manila is being slurred by police and barangay authorities, the main causes of a terrorizing bottleneck in the Old Panaderos area, right after the Lambingan Bridge coming from Sta. Ana.

The dreaded stretch leading to Kalentong in Mandaluyong has turned into a devil's gymnasium, with the illegal terminals and clog-causing spots managed and manipulated by a shameless police officer and a barangay chair, aided by his sons, who get weekly bribes from drivers associations, mainly in the Boni Avenue route.

* * *

As expected, Mayor Atienza moved swiftly after learning of the mess.

A mobile team was soon seen shooing away drivers from the illegal spots while also making several arrests.

As expected, the sleek Laying Espinosa was not among those apprehended.

Last heard of, he was personally directing operations in that spot after the Lambingan Bridge, the bend turning right to riverside Mandaluyong, encouraging the violators while blocking rightful access of drivers with ticket to pick up passengers there.

Mayor Atienza may try and send in another team but, sure as day, disorder will be back the moment law enforcers leave the place.

Thanks mainly to Laying Espinosa, who make a direct defiance of the law, play it blind and encourage the malpractice for as long as violating drivers fill his piggy bank daily.

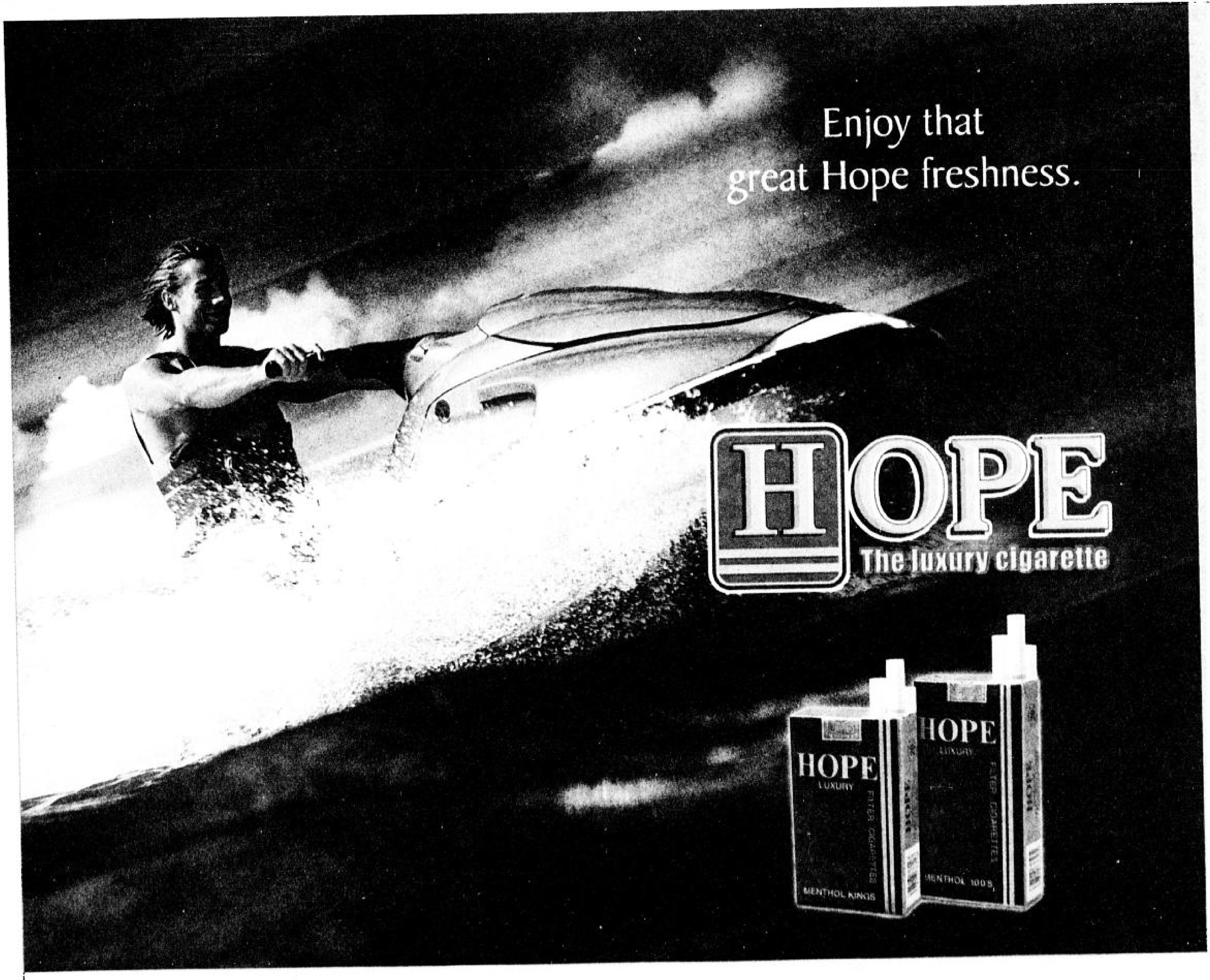
Meanwhile, drivers in the Vergara route have made a clarification and requested that cops not be included in the report on the daily traffic mess.

Espinosa, they claim, is the biggest cause, the immovable maintainer of that devil's gymnasium and daily hell right after Lambingan Bridge.

With Atienza out of the dirty picture, we dared ask from whom the dreaded Laying Espinosa draws might and power.

Listen. There came claims he has been dropping the name of a high government official.

And it sounds very similar to that of our esteemed friend, Angelo Reyes, secretary of Local and Interior Government. Wow!



Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

15 overseas tourneys lined up for boxers

By Musong R. Castillo

THE SPORT WHICH PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo said should be funded heavily in the country's bid to win its first Olympic gold medal will have a busy year ahead.

The Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines is planning to send teams to 15 international tournaments to prepare the boxers for the Asian Games and the Beijing Olympics.

A crack team will fly to India on the first week of next month to take part in the Asian Invitational International Boxing Championships in Pimpri Chinchiwad before another squad departs for Karachi in Pakistan for the third Greenhill Cup on Feb. 12-18.

Ms Arroyo, in a speech delivered to national athletes who gave the Philippines its first overall title in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang, had said that boxing is one of the sports that should enjoy more financial support.

She added that the Philippines should focus only on 10 sports in the 2008 Olympiad in China, with boxing being one of them.

"We have to prepare truly hard because this is not like the Southeast Asian Games anymore," Roger Fortaleza, the Abap sec-gen, told the INQUIRER in Filipino. "Once the new year comes, our boxers will buckle down to serious work."

Stints in the Commonwealth Games, the Mayor's Cup, a slugfest in Finland, among others, are up before oil-rich Doha in Qatar hosts the 2006 15th Asiad in December.

Boxing contributed eight gold medals to the RP cache of 113 victories in the last SEAG, with the men and women's teams winning four divisions each.

The quadrennial Asian Games, though, have not been kind to the Philippines recently, with boxing failing to win a gold medal since the 1994 edition in Hiroshima, Japan, where fly Elias Recaido, lightwelter Reynaldo Galido and lightfly Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco won.

MULTITITLED light flyweight Harry Tañamor (left) is expected to lead several Philippine teams to international meets. AP

Chairman's Cup today

BAGUIO CITY—A RECORD FIELD of 230 players are seeing action in the Chairman's Cup golf tournament of the Camp John Hay Golf Club which tees off today and tomorrow here.

Organizers added an extra playing date to accommodate the large number of entries, most of whom are vacationing in the city.

Sponsors of the tournament are Smart Communications, Camp John Hay Development Co., Club Leisure Corp., Golforce, Le Chef, FMMI, John Hay Waters, Wilson, DHN Construction and Development Corp.

Robert John Sobrepeña, chair of the Camp John Hay Golf Club in whose honor the tournament is being held every yearend, will be leading the entries.

Tomorrow's entries will be sent off by shotgun start at 8 a.m.

Para Games cap banner year for Manila sports

THE YEAR ABOUT TO END WAS A fruitful one for sports in Manila.

The father and son team of Mayor Lito and Arnold "Ali" Atienza sustained another busy season for sports in the city by hosting several big events like the Asean Para Games, the Manila Youth Games and the Manila Marathon.

Through the Manila Sports Council (Masco) headed by Ali, the city also established links with other local government sports councils to widen the scope of Local Government Unit involvement in providing new avenues for recruitment, identification, and talent exposure for the youth.

"It has always been said that the youth is the hope of the nation," Mayor Atienza said. "That is why City Hall is focusing on the youth by providing them with endeavors that will guide their path toward becoming assets of society."

Masco's partnership with LGUs paved the way for the creation of the first MY Games National Invitational, a week-long event held last October which assembled more than 2,500 of the best young athletes from the country's 33 major cities, municipalities and provinces.

Championships in athletics, swimming, football, taekwondo and little league softball and baseball were disputed even as entries from the United States, Hawaii, Canada and Britain also saw action.

The Atienzas bared that many LGUs have also expressed their intention to host the meet, which saw the rise of young athletes such as 15-year-old Laguna teenager Maria Cecilia Constantino who won five gold medals in athletics.

The competitions were actually an offshoot of the MY Games, which held its fourth edition in April. About 10,000 athletes from practically all the 897 barangays, six congressional districts and 130 public and private schools in Manila saw action.

A mammoth field of over 50,000 runners made up the starting field in the third Manila Marathon. The race is expected to clinch a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records with the sheer number of finishers surpassing the 38,706 mark of the Centennial Boston Marathon.

"Not only did the Manila Marathon symbolize unity and solidarity among Filipinos, but more significantly, it served as a tool in tapping social consciousness to help less privileged children in the countryside," said the young Atienza.

Registration fees for the run were waived by the Masco in exchange for donations of canned goods from participants to benefit underfed children in Antique in Western Visayas and Kalinga in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Capping a banner year for Manila sports, the best differently-abled athletes from Southeast Asia gathered at the Rizal Memorial Stadium earlier this month in the Third Asean Para Games which regional power Thailand dominated.

"If we call our athletes who competed in the Southeast Asian Games our modern-day heroes, we should call our differently-abled athletes in the Asean Para Games our modern day super heroes," Ali said after the RP bets finished fifth.

SPORTSWATCH

Malaysian netter falls

MARK CONCEPCION RALLIED FROM A 0-5 first set deficit to outplay Shane Perry Tsen of Malaysia, 7-5, 7-6 (3), in the unisex 10-under division yesterday at the start of the 2005 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop at the Philam Homes Tennis Club courts in Quezon City. Concepcion was joined in the next round by Alessandra Rodriguez, a 6-0, 6-2 victor over Joel Atienza; Ivan Valenzuela who whipped Brysl Libao, 6-1, 6-3; Enrique Ferrer, who won over Patricia Paez, 6-1, 6-0; LA Canizarez who routed Ma. Angelica Sunga, 6-1, 6-4; Treena Quierez, a 7-6, 6-4 winner over Maxine Melia; and Vince Salas who trounced Lorenzo Luna, 6-0, 6-1. In the boys' 12-under category of the tourney organized by the CTW and supported by Adidas, Ivan Adato edged Jason Talatayod in the final-set tiebreak, 6-4, 2-6, 10-2; Arjohn dela Cruz blanked Patric Paez 6-0, 6-0; Aldrick Olivan tripped Eric de Romas 6-3, 7-5; and Kevin Mamawal outlasted Joren Buenaflor, 6-1, 7-6.

Senior golf ends at W'Wack

THE SAN MIGUEL SUPER DRY BEER SENIOR Series, a six-leg event the Federation of Philippine Amateur Senior Golfers Inc. launched earlier this year, winds up Thursday, Dec. 29, at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club. The Capitol Hills Golf and Country Club seniors chapter, headed by Malaya columnist Ducky Paredes, is hosting the 18-hole tournament, according to FPASGI president Col. Abelardo Villanueva. Tee-off time is between 6:30 and 8:30 a.m. Up for grabs are prizes for the individual and team champions. Players aged 55 to 59 years old will be in Group A, 60-64 in Group B, 65-69 in Group C, 70-74 in Group D and 75 and above in Group E.

Coach E enrollment grows

THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL EXPECTS more enrollees for its upcoming sessions at The Zone in Makati and clubsixfifty in Libis, Quezon City, this January. More than 100 students attended the cage clinic in the previous term. Clinic founder and PBA champion coach Eric Altamirano said the growing number of enrollees is proof of the success of the personalized and scientific training that the school initiated in August 2004. Classes will start on Jan. 25 at The Zone and on Jan. 27 at clubsixfifty and end on March 26. For inquiries, call 631-1195 or 0921-7562639.

Derby stakes P3M, Innova

THE FASTEST-WIN CHAMPION WILL DRIVE home a brand new Toyota Innova and share in the P3 million guaranteed prize in today's championship round of the Pamaskong Salpukan 6-Cock Derby at the Makati Coliseum. After five rounds of eliminations, 17 cockers remained unbeaten with three wins each: Boy de Roca (two entries), Tony Lasala, Joel Ocsena, Bong Garcia, Rey Briones, Emil Chua, Lito Orillaza, Bernie Arthur, Boy Javier and Carrie Chua, R. Diokno, Butchoy Olano, Leo Leyba, Michael Monillas, Mike Romulo, E. R. Domingo and the Pahamak entry. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Watch Pinoy Power in America's Hottest Dance Challenge!
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE
SEE IT FIRST ON ABC
Friday 10 pm
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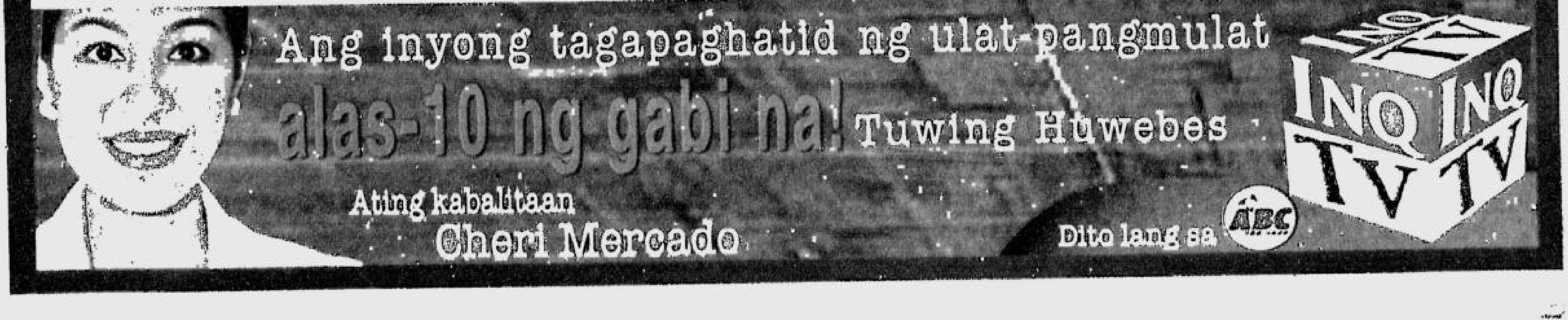
Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	Rockstar: Inxs		Dokyu	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Pilipinas Game KNB?	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	S.O.C.O.			Insider
AXN		House		Las Vegas		Ripley's Believe It or Not		PSI Factor (Season III)		24		Mondo Magic	Samsung Sports World	Ultimate Guinness World Records	Ultimate Guinness World Records	CSI: Miami (Season 3)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Accelacers GP			The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Kisapmata				Espadang Patpat				Volta			Persona	Beautiful Life (9:15 PM)				Jamias Barako Ng Maynila	
Cinemax				Dragnet (4:15 PM)				Deep Evil			Look Who's Talking Now			Philadelphia				Snakehead Terror (11:05PM)	
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International Hour China		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Mostly True Stories		Destruction Mars		Anatomy Of A Shark Bite Planes, Pigs & The Price Of Brides		The History Of Singapore				Mythbusters 3		Mega Moves		Hour Asia			
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Un-lakeable Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN						Motorsport Asia	Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Goals!	Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Men's Trick Shot Magic		Rewind 2005 Kaohsiung World Pool Champ				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Commited	Knock First	1 Hr. Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Complete Savages	What I Like About You	Veronica Mars		Last Comic Standing		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Marriage Works In Christ	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Faith In Motion	Adventures In Odyssey	EWTN Original Productions	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Defending Life	EWTN Gallery	In The Heart Of The Church	Mother Angelica Live Classics		One In Their Hearts	Catholic Social Teaching	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Carpenter's Shop	Our Father's Plan	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Five Days To Midnight		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Changi		Five Days To Midnight		To The Ends Of The Earth			Sue Thomas: FB Eye II		Wire In The Blood
HBO			Stinger (3:45 PM)				Bring It On Again			S.W.A.T. (7:05 PM)				The Bonfires Of The Vanities				The School Of Rock	
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network		TBA				Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Shorties Watching Shorties	South Park	Banzai	Wwe Raw				Filter	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV		Dr. Katz	Premium Blend	Shorties Watching Shorties	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Mad TV		Late Show With David Letterman	Late Show With David Letterman
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's	Will Work For Stars		Style Star	Life & Style		Intimate Portrait		Breathing Room	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines	Jams	Whatever Things	MTV Hits	Hanging Out	The 70's House	Pop Inc		MTV Hits				Homecoming	Get Spotted	TRL		Viva La Bam	Laguna Beach	Get Hitch'd	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Taijo 5	OPM MYX	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Protecting The President		Faces And Places			Extreme Latitude	Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Made In Hong Kong		Faces And Places	
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	3rd ASEAN Para-Olympic Games				Teledyaryo				Krusada Kontra Krimen		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues/What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot/ Right On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	The Fairly Odd Parents/Danny Phantom/All That/Viewer's Choice			1, 2, 3	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia		
PBO			Nag-iisang Ikaw				Lalay Sa Tubig				Pablik Enemi 1N2				Bertud Ng Putik				Fight Night 2
Qtv		Bodyguard	Sister Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Star	Hotelier	All In	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	Pusong Wagi		News On Q	Balikbayan		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberrys	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Iron Chef		Trading Spouses		Extreme Make-Over		Newswatch Now	Keep Up The Good Work		
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA 2005 Gaz de France Stars Belgium					JVC Interscholastic			Sagupaan	NBA Jam	Sportsdesk		Solar Sports 2005 Year In Review				GWS Ep 52-2005	NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus				Big 12 College Football TBD						NBA Game Indiana @ San Antonio					NBA Game Philadelphia @ Denver				
Star Movies	Me, Myself and Irene				The Good Shepherd			Dick			Body Count (7:35 PM)			Soul Assassin			Underworld (10:40PM)		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	Smallville		Medical Investigation		The Practice		Friends	Smallville
Studio 23								Batman Beyond	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race: Family Edition		CSI (8:20 PM)	Life As We Know It (9:10PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan Cheri Mercado

Dito lang sa ABC

ENTERTAINME

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

OPRAH: Good listener

Most fascinating interviews of 2005

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Ruben V. Nepales

LOS ANGELES—MALIGAYANG Pasko!

There's nothing like being back home for the holidays but since we couldn't do that this year, we've been wearing out our CDs of The Madrigal Singers' "Joy" and Ryan Cayabyab's "Pasko I and II" to somehow feel the magic of Christmas in the Philippines.

The Madz's version of "Sabit-Sabit Sa Christmas Tree" never fails to bring smiles and chuckles to our home every holiday season. Thank you, Yoyoy Villame (who composed this song), the Madz and Sony BMG Records for this gift of music and amusement. Our two girls were toddlers and could hardly understand the lyrics of "Sabit-Sabit" when they first heard it one December evening in 1997 but the smiles on their faces were priceless.

And now, the J Lo "You Know" Award this year goes to … Nathan Lane!

Nathan easily won this award for saying "You know" in almost every sentence he said during our press con with him early this month.

Nathan is, you know, a worthy recipient of our award named after J Lo whose, you know, habit of saying those two words is, you know, almost legendary.

The following folks will just have to settle for the less important distinction of being the most fascinating interviews of 2005. We also did a list last year so we may have started a tradition with this annual rundown. As we explained last year, the chosen interview subjects "simply stood out for various reasons, not always because they were loquacious or famous. They are listed randomly, that is, not in any order of importance."

A few memorable quotes follow our brief recall of each fascinating interviewee.

Oprah Winfrey

The famous TV talk show host was loquacious, of course. And smart, highly persuasive and a good listener. Not since Barbra Streisand were there so many of my press group colleagues in attendance. Oprah being Oprah, she couldn't help assisting our moderator in pacing our talk with her.

"I feel no pressure to do anything other than to be myself. My number one prayer for myself is, 'God, please let me fulfill my potential while here on earth.' The pressure is to use yourself in such a way that fulfills you as a human being—mine happens to be on television, witnessed by millions of people.

"But I know there is a commonality in the human experience…Every single human being wishes to be valued, so whether you're fighting with your 2-year-old about whatever, it's all about your wanting to be validated. Everybody wants to know, did you hear me and did that matter to you what I had to say?"

Russell Crowe

Several minutes into our interview with Russell, who is known for being, er, mercurial, he complained about several things distracting him, including photographers snapping away despite his request that they hold off until the press con was done.

Russell pleaded, "If you just chill, it would be great, thank you." When things didn't settle down, especially on the subject of taking pictures, the actor said, "I'm going for a cigarette. You guys talk it out and have a little argument about it and I'll come back in." With those words, Russell left the Four Seasons' Burton Room.

A few minutes later, he did come back. But the volatile actor didn't take his seat. He remained standing behind his chair for the rest of the press con. As Russell answered questions, sometimes he paced back and forth, hands in the pockets of his blue jeans or arms crossed over his chest. He lit and smoked a cigarette although smoking in public indoor spaces is banned in California.

On whether filming the slugging scenes in "Cinderella Man" had changed his attitude toward boxing:

"It's a lot more scientific when you get involved in it than it may appear from the outside. However, it's not something that I ever desire to do again. I had a very concentrated period during the course of this film of learning why fighting is not a good thing (he laughed). I have a great deal of respect for any man who can strip down to his shorts, get into a confined space like that (a boxing ring) where there's nowhere to run and face down another man. But it's not something that I personally get any kind of thrill from.

"What I was saying before partially joking is true. I don't want to ever get myself into a violent situation again. I've seen and felt its effect. I know more now and I really don't want to find myself in that situation using that knowledge."

More than a week after Russell said this, he was arrested in New York for allegedly throwing a telephone at a hotel clerk.

Tom Cruise

The man who used to be very guarded during interviews—a master at being engaging without revealing much—repeated his public declarations of love for Katie Holmes, who just became The Girlfriend at the time of our interview. As we have written, if being in love results in an actor being more accessible and expressive, we'll take it.

But apparently, Tom's effusiveness was a result of no longer being reined in by his publicist, the legendary Pat Kingsley. The superstar fired Pat and hired his own sister, Lee Anne DeVette. It was during this time that he bounced on Oprah's couch and talked more openly about his Scientology beliefs. Eventually, Tom dropped Lee Anne too and hired Paul Bloch, who, many say, will put a lid on Tom's public giddiness.

ROURKE: Spicy

On folks who are suspicious of his motives in trotting out a romantic relationship with Katie: "Never be surprised about how stupid people can be. I am in love. Something extraordinary has happened to me and I haven't felt this way. I can't restrain myself. It's a beautiful thing. People ask me and I'm going to be honest about it."

Mickey Rourke

Fortunately, there are still cursing, devil-may-care actors left in Hollywood like Mickey Rourke to spice things up. A brunette bombshell (Mickey's girlfriend) sat in the back of the hotel meeting room as the chain-smoking actor answered questions with characteristic humor and candor.

On how he deals with fame now that

MOST/ A2-2

31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival is ongoing with seven entries that comprise Batch 1. Batch 2 consists of three entries—including this one—that open on Jan. 1.)

"Lagot Ka sa Kuya Ko"

Stars Ronnie Ricketts, Mariz, Nadine Samonte, Angelica Jones, Dinky Doo, Carlos Morales, Marita Zobel, Onyok Velasco, Gerard Pizzaras, John Apacible
Directed by Ronn-Rick

RICKETS is always dependable, come film fest time. In 1995, he came out with "Huwag Mong Isuko ang Laban." For last year's Manila Film Festival, he fielded "Mano-Mano 3."

Now, he produces, writes, directs and acts in "Lagot Ka sa Kuya Ko."

Ricketts plays Alex, a taxi driver-slash-underground street fighter who also finds the time to act as bodyguard to his long-lost sister Sarah (Samonte).

The siblings were raised separately after their mom (Zobel) went abroad. Alex, however, keeps his true identity a secret from Sarah, who was introduced to her by rapper-pal Boogie (Doo).

Seems trouble hounds Sarah even at home. Her next-door neighbor Zandro (Morales) happens to be a hired killer and he gets embroiled in a skirmish with Alex.

Alex and the gang flee to the province, with the help of a bar girl (Jones) and a tomboy (Mariz).

According to the drumbeaters: "The final confrontation scene between Alex and Zandro, as well as their fight scene in an elevator" are but two of the film's highlights.

Ricketts describes his film fest entry as a "good old-fashioned, straight action-drama film."

It's also a family affair. Mariz is Mrs. Ricketts in real life and the couple's daughters Marinela and Marie appear in the slugfest.

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Most fascinating interviews of 2005

From page A2-1

his career seems to be up again (for good, we hope): "The only thing I could say is, people [have been coming] up to me in the last six months and they go, 'Oh, you're back.' I look at them like, you don't know where the f--k I've been for 14 years. You don't know what it's like when you've been gone so long that it doesn't feel like you're back. You still feel like you're in the garbage can so it's like, it's nice to have the lid off but you can still smell the s--t."

Jane Fonda

I'm dating myself but the Manila Times Sunday magazine cover photo of Jane joining an anti-war protest on the steps fronting UP Diliman's administrative building was an indelible image in my childhood. Okay, I was a very precocious baby, already reading newspapers even when I was only in diapers.

Our press con with Jane was also one of the well-attended. All those fitness sessions must be responsible: Jane has the best posture among all the Hollywood actresses we've met.

"Life isn't fair. I don't like it when celebrities complain about this sort of thing. You make your bed, you lie in it. All told, yeah, pretty good. I wish though that in the United States these days, the media would have more, I was going to say balls, but I'll say ovaries (laughs).

"Never leave yourself behind because you think that if you really brought your whole self into the relationship, then you would be loved. What that means is, that you're willing to give up your relationship with yourself in order to be in a relationship with a man. It doesn't work. And you end up very angry. It has nothing to do with the men.

FONDA: Life's not fair.

"It's too bad that we have to ask, if you were a man what would you do for the world. If I were a full human being, which I hope I'm becoming, I would do every possible thing to have peace instead of war. Nobody is number one forever—not individuals, and not nations. It's best to make friends…to be sure that when you're on the decline, there's a nice friendly ground to land on. For bullies, nations that are arrogant, people who are arrogant, the crash is really painful. I love this country and I'm worried about it."

Michael Caine

It's a good thing that we saw Michael before our interview began. We asked if we could query him about something. We were taken aback by his very strong disdain for the subject, which he told us in succinct words. The harsh words were not directed at us but over the subject in our proposed question. We hurriedly thought of another question to ask.

"My mother formed me as a person when I was 6 years old. My brother was 3. It was the beginning of World War II and my father went away. My mother was the toughest woman you'll ever come across. Instead of crying and saying, 'What am I going to do?' she turned to my brother and me and said, 'Now listen, your father has gone away. You two have to look after me.' And with that sentence, she instantly made two little men. My brother and I said, 'We'll do that, don't worry.' And we did.

"I've played football with Pele. The first person ever to take me to Las Vegas was Frank Sinatra. I used to have Chinese food every Saturday night in Danny Kaye's kitchen. Shirley MacLaine brought me to Hollywood to star in 'Gambit' with her. She gave me a party and the first person who walked in was Gloria Swanson and she was only... she was tiny.

"I got knighted by the Queen. She said to me, 'I have a feeling that you'd be good in what you do for a very long time (laughter).' I said, 'Yes, I have, your majesty' and then I kept my big mouth shut because I was about to tell her, 'And so have you.' I was afraid they'd take the bloody knighthood right away from me."

Johnny Depp

We interviewed Johnny in three different settings—the Bahamas, Toronto and LA—but he was consistently engaging. As we wrote in last Friday's column, this man is a beautiful soul.

"With the birth of my daughter, it was like another person's life had ceased and this new guy emerged who could see things clearly.

"There's a piece that William Saroyan wrote as a preface to his play 'The Time of Your Life.' That is the greatest philosophy to give to the kiddies. Essentially it says, do no bad to no one. Let no one do bad to you. I'm paraphrasing horribly. I read 'Desiderata' by Max Ehrmann to them (his kids). It should be mandatory reading for kiddies."

Meryl Streep

The Great Actress is back on our list. Meryl Streep—need we say more?

"There are different predators lying in wait for my performance, not other peoples' performances. Maybe I have more tools now to understand how to approach a part than I did when I was 27 but I felt more confident then because I had the arrogance of youth and all that stuff. Is there one performance that I felt was praised and I don't think it was deserved? Every single one of my performances (laughing). There are things I would change in them. I hope no one notices (laughing). I don't have one that I despise.

STREEP: Need we say more?

CAINE: Sir Michael

CLOONEY: It's his year.

"People get sick of you. It's a long career. It's like 30 years. People go, ugh, her again and I understand that. But it's now about the work of acting and to see how far, how deep and how rich this stew can be. I am always surprised that they still give me work. I'm really surprised because there's not a lot of older women working so I'm happy when these scripts come along.

"I remember I was so nervous to work with Robert De Niro and then I came away after the first day of work and somebody said God, what was it like? And I said it was easy. When the actor is really good, it's easy because they're not fighting you or struggling. They're just sitting in the chair with you and it's an exchange.

Peter Jackson

At the rate he is churning out these terrific, mass-entertaining epics, Peter may be the worthy successor to Steven Spielberg (the fun Spielberg until he decided to turn serious and arty on us). Peter is not a bombastic speaker but his quiet demeanor draws you in. Besides, we wanted to hear the words of a man who managed to make the giant-scaled "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and "King Kong" in less than a decade.

"The original ('King Kong') film is a wonderful example of escapist entertainment. Escapist in the sense that it has things that I love about going to films. I love going to movies for pure entertainment, to have an experience that you're never going to have in your real life…When I was 9 years old, I cried when I saw the original film.

"That experience had such a profound effect on me. I wanted to become a filmmaker the moment I saw it. It was strange. Well, I wanted to become a monster-maker (laughter) to start with because when I was 9, I didn't really know what directing was. Really, I didn't understand what being a director was but I certainly wanted to make monsters and to be able to create that imaginative experience. For me, 'Kong' does what entertainment should. It captivates you, it sweeps you away to another place but it also makes you feel very emotionally affected."

Woody Allen

How often do you meet a genius and legend? As we wrote in our column on Woody, whenever legends like him, Barbra Streisand, Meryl Streep and composer John Williams enter a room, we half-expect the blaring of trumpets. Sans fanfare, Woody was there in front of us at New York's Waldorf Astoria, looking like a kindly old grandpa with his trademark black-framed glasses and well-worn brown shoes (the same pair he wore when we saw him again in—gasp!—La-la land for the West Coast premiere of "Match Point"; his wife Soon-Yi stood by his side as folks queued to congratulate him on this movie).

"Everyone thinks there's some kind of divine or mellow thing in getting older but there's no advantage to it at all. I have been very lucky so far because I still have a certain amount of energy and, as I say, my health has been good. But, you know, as you get older, as you can see, I'm a little hard of hearing. I have trouble picking up what you're saying.

"Gradually, you disintegrate, your hearing goes, the eyesight goes, you look up in a couple of years and you're walking a little slower. I just don't see any advantage in getting older. It's not like you suddenly get wise and accept the world for what it is, accept people for what they are and suddenly realize what love is—none of that happens. Your bones ache more (laughter) is what happens. It has been slower for that to happen to me because of my genes but it's inevitable and it's around the corner. I wish it wasn't."

George Clooney

This is George Clooney's year. He made three daring moves: a) direct a black and white film, b) tackle an "un-commercial" story about how journalist Edward Murrow battled US Sen. Joseph McCarthy during the latter's communist witch hunts in the 1950s, and c) cast a relative unknown, David Strathairn, and not himself because it was the correct thing to do. The result is the acclaimed "Good Night, and Good Luck."

That George earned a Golden Globe Best Supporting Actor nomination for "Syriana" is icing on the cake. To top it all, when you meet George, he is one star who will actually engage you in a real conversation.

MOST/ A2-3

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Most fascinating interviews . . .

From page A2-2

On what he has learned from past relationships: "Well, clearly-nothing. Clearly, that I should stick to directing."

On "Good Night…": "I felt that in this MTV generation, where everyone's afraid that no one has an attention span longer than three seconds, silence and stillness are actually to our benefit. The [dialogues] are so good, the actors are so good. David is so good. When you can put a camera on someone for five minutes and not move it, you've got a good actor and you've got good words."

FIENNES: Boyish

Viggo Mortensen

It's a tribute to Viggo's acting skills that he can be this strong, powerful character onscreen and yet off camera, he is a shy, low-key, soft-spoken guy. He is also a poet, singer, composer, photographer, painter and book publisher ...

On his artistic pursuits: "These days, I'm a little busy. But I steal moments here and there. You don't have to take a picture of something. You don't have to write about it. Or even talk about it. You can just appreciate that it's there. If I don't have moments once in a while where I try to do nothing and think about nothing, so that things can come in, then I'm not very effective in that way.

"That's why I like to spend time by myself sometimes, even just to go and see a movie. Or go on a camping trip. It's nice to share it with people. But if you go with someone, let's say you're going for a walk in the woods, you are seeing their point of view. Which can be interesting. And you're discussing it. So you're putting things out.

"But if you were by yourself walking through the woods or seeing a movie or whatever it is, it's all coming in. That's why I like to spend time by myself and recharge."

VIGGO: Intense

Ralph Fiennes

Ralph, serious and brooding in movies (although it was a treat to hear him camp it up as the villain Victor's voice in the brilliant animated film "Wallace & Gromit"), was surprisingly given to breaking into boyish grins at London's Dorchester Hotel. He smiled when we told him that a certain editor back home adored him (and Viggo too—but we did not tell Ralph that).

On the loose, spontaneous quality of his lovemaking scene with Rachel Weisz in "The Constant Gardener": "By the time we filmed that scene, we were quite our way into the shoot. Rachel is a wonderful acting partner—very warm, relaxed and funny. One of the best things to make those (lovemaking) scenes work is to have a happy sense of relaxation between two people. It was not choreographed and we ... played a bit. Fernando (Meirelles, director) would tell us, do that again, undo that button, take off that stocking..."

Shirley MacLaine

What better way to spend an LA afternoon than with Shirley MacLaine, the honorary lady member of the Rat Pack and who has outlived Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis, Jr.? She was recently quoted as saying, "I didn't (sleep with Frank Sinatra), and why on earth would I lie about not having slept with Frank? It's insane. He was too skinny for me. I liked Dean better, anyway."

The New Age medium or channel told us that her beloved dog Terry, who "co-wrote" her latest book, was an Egyptian in a previous life. And that Terry knew our press con moderator during the ancient days of Egypt. It was that kind of afternoon.

"I'd love to work with someone older but I can't find anybody…The more I know of men the more I love my dog…I was so stupid, I turned down 'Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore' because Marty Scorsese was not yet Marty Scorsese. I also went off to New Zealand to do a picture instead of 'Breakfast at Tiffany's'…Those were my two regrets."

Pierce Brosnan

Pierce has moved on and gotten over the fact that he no longer has the James Bond job. There's sweet justice, though. He walked through a hotel lobby in his underwear and boots and nothing else in the black comedy "The Matador" and look what he got to celebrate his post-007 career. A Golden Globe best actor nomination.

"There's a certain maturity around the abdomen in that sequence. I forgot to suck it in, basically."

(To be continued)

(E-mail the columnist at rvnepales_5585@yahoo.com.)

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MiG Ayesa

MTV STAYING ALIVE
MUSIC SUMMIT FOR HIV/AIDS
December 31, Saturday, 3:00 - 7:00pm

Spread the message and relive the music with performances by Bamboo, Rivermaya, Parokya Ni Edgar, Urbandub, Kitchie Nadal and many more, with the special participation of MiG Ayesa of Rockstar INXS.

Rivermaya
Chito Miranda of Parokya ni Edgar
Bamboo

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‘Housewife’ Huffman desperate no more

LOS ANGELES—FELICITY HUFFMAN wasn't supposed to win the Emmy over her more glamorous and talked-about "Desperate Housewives" co-stars. But she did. Now, she's an Academy Award favorite for her performance in "Transamerica"—in which she plays a man prepping for sex-change surgery.

Not bad for an actress who was thinking a few years ago that maybe she wasn't supposed to have a Hollywood career, after all.

Through the few ups and many downs in her career, Huffman often thought about quitting, pulling into her driveway and crying with her head on the steering wheel after bad days and failed auditions.

Huffman managed to fleetingly catch the eye of audiences with bit parts "The Spanish Prisoner" and "Magnolia," and she endeared herself to a cult of fans

SHE almost quit acting, believe it or not.

who caught her as the slightly flighty producer on the acclaimed but short-lived TV series "Sports Night."

To those who wondered why Huffman did not steadily rise to bigger and better parts, the answer is easy.

"No one offered them to me," Huffman, 43, said over a salad at a cafe near the home she and her husband, actor William H. Macy, share with their two daughters in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley.

"I'd get three lines here, four days in a movie there. When you'd drive on to the set, you don't know where you're going, there's no chair for you. They're going, 'Who are you again?' This was the first time that I'd been considered for a major part, much less a lead."

Breakthroughs

Huffman's two breakthroughs came almost simultaneously. After reluctantly meeting with ABC about yet another TV project she figured would go nowhere, she was cast as the overwhelmed homemaker Lynette in "Desperate Housewives."

As she was doing an early cast reading of the show's pilot script, Huffman got a call from her agent that she had gotten the part of Bree in "Transamerica," playing a transsexual whose final surgery to become a woman hits a snag after she learns of a teenage son, a cynical street hustler (Kevin Zegers), she never knew she fathered.

Why not?

"Transamerica" writer-director Duncan Tucker had first seen Huffman on stage in David Mamet's off-Broadway production "Cryptogram." Later catching Huffman in bit movie roles or guest spots on "Frasier," Tucker found himself wondering:

"Why is this woman not a star, like Frances McDormand, or the girl-next-door Meryl Streep? I just had this gut instinct that she was the kind of transformative actress who would totally disappear inside the skin of somebody created from scratch."

Star rises

The youngest of eight children, with six sisters and one brother, Huffman settled on acting by age 10, after her mother sent her off to a summer theater camp. After initial stage success in New York, Huffman got by in Hollywood on parts in such movies as "Hackers" and the odd TV role until "Desperate Housewives" made her a star.

Though critics say "Desperate Housewives" is in a sophomore slump, Huffman and co-stars Teri Hatcher, Marcia Cross and Eva Longoria grabbed four of the five Golden Globe nominations for best actress in a TV comedy or musical, and the show was nominated for best series. (Huffman also earned a Globe nomination for Best Actress in a Dramatic Film for "Transamerica.")

Huffman diplomatically defends the show against accusations of a creative funk.

"My experience has been the scripts have been great. I think it's been a wonderful year," Huffman said.

The year could get even better if "Transamerica" brings Huffman an Oscar to go with her Emmy.

Hubby balks

Huffman still is waiting to see if the film will translate to more meaty screen roles. But she has been cautioned by Macy, who signed on as executive producer of "Transamerica," that she better not take another job over the "Desperate Housewives" summer break.

"My husband [says] he's going to kill me and divorce me," Huffman said. "He's ready for us to have some time together, and he's ready not to be Mr. Mom, anymore." *AP*

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ALICE DIXSON
OYO BOY SOTTO BING LOYZAGA AIZA SEGUERRA
JEFFREY QUIZON AND VICTOR NERI
Enteng Kabisote 2
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND CONTINUES
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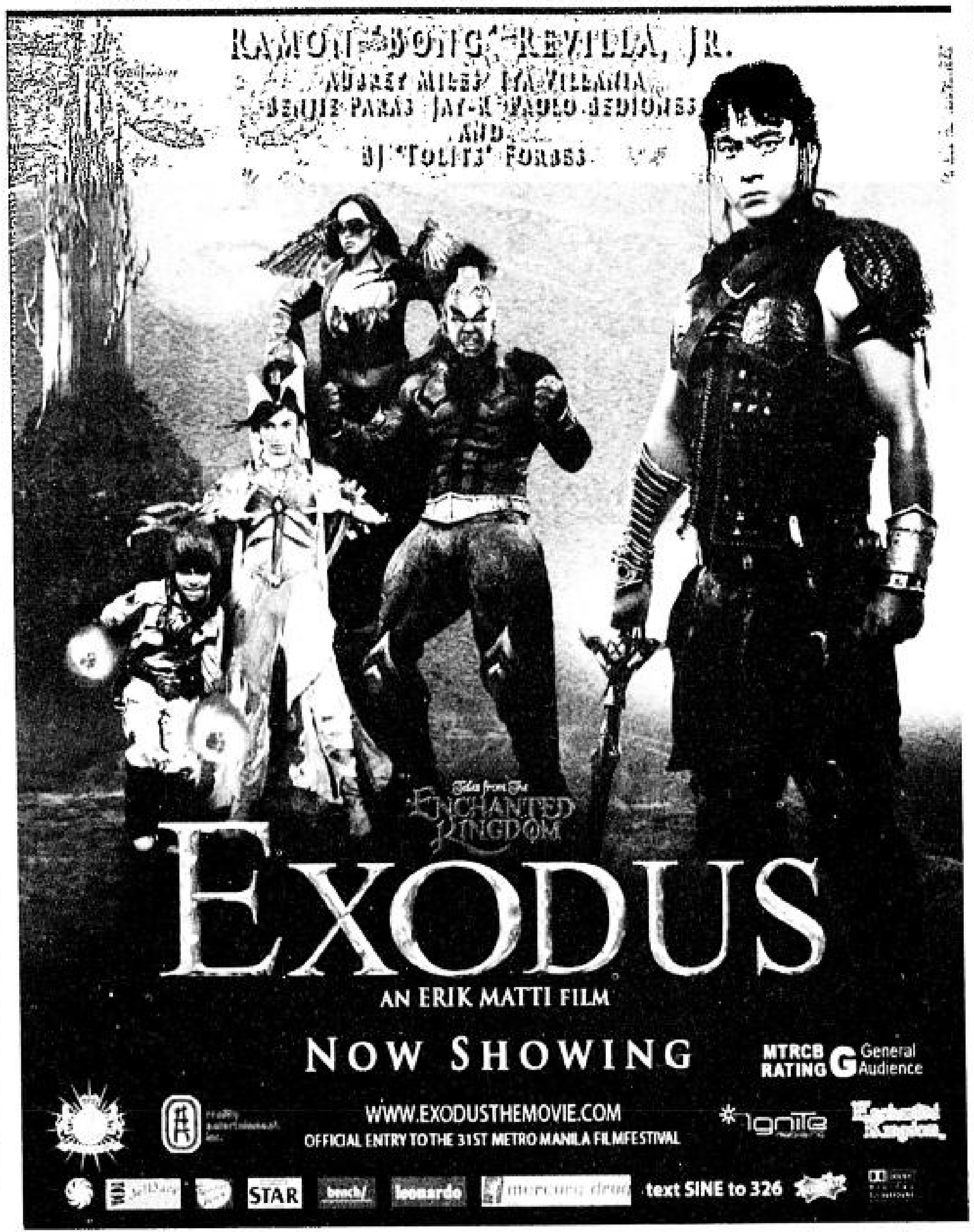

RAMON "BONG" REVILLA, JR.
AUBREY MILES IYA VILLANIA
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ANDREA Del Rosario ANA Capri JAMES Blanco LIZA and Lorena
MANIWALA
MAKIRAMDAM
MATAKOT...
Kutob
DOLBY IN SELECTED THEATRES
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DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
AXN
Pacific Blue
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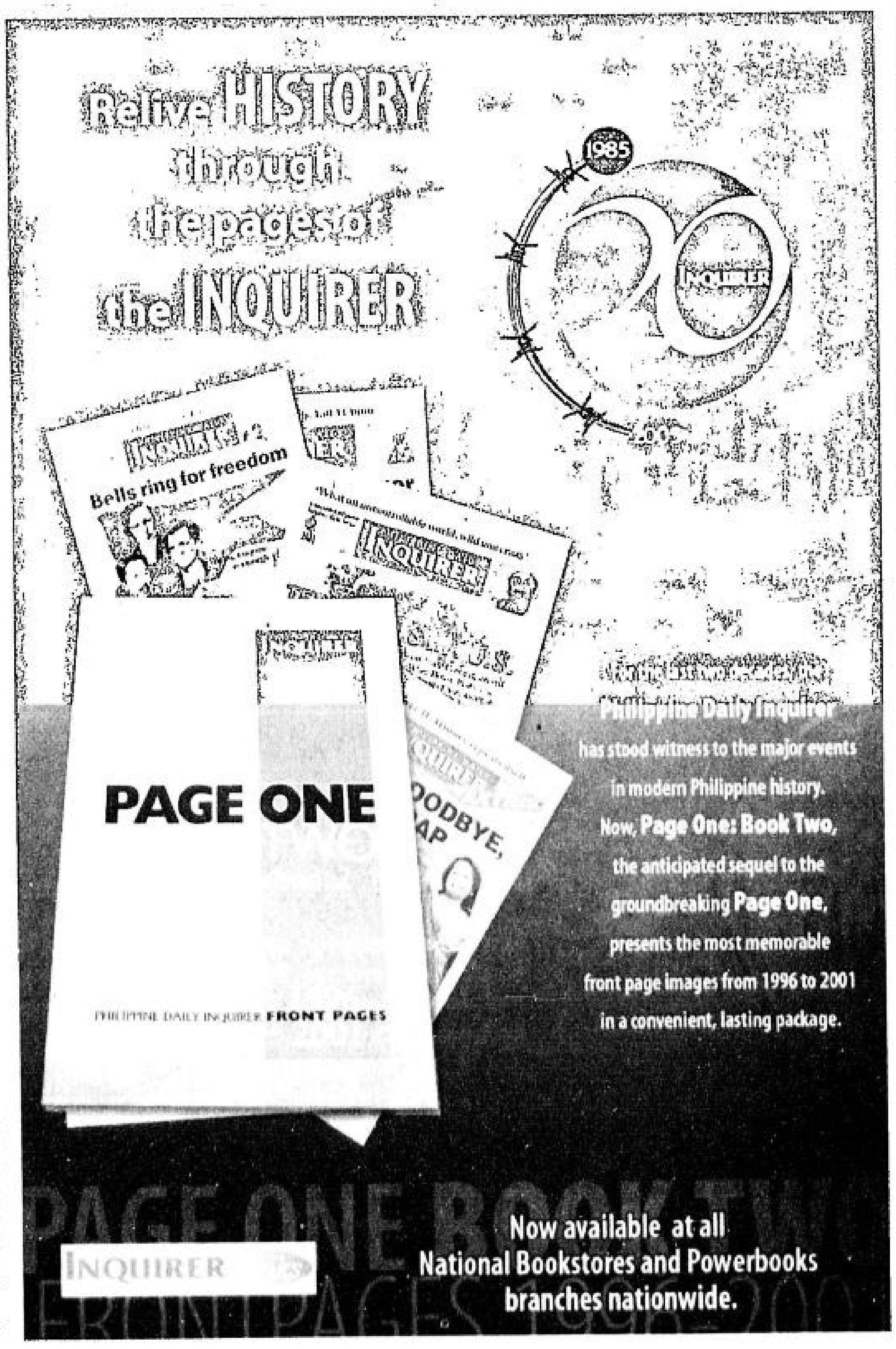

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Instructive, compelling reality challenge for filmmakers

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LAST MONDAY AT 11 A.M., WE CAUGHT "REEL Race" on the Discovery channel, and found it an unusually compelling viewing experience. It's a special kind of reality challenge, because its contestants are young filmmakers from all over the world, and they are judged on the quality of the four-minute documentaries they sequentially shoot in different parts of the world.

Thus, it's a combination of "The Amazing Race" and a talent search for writer-cameraman-editor-directors. It's unusually compelling because it requires its finalists to work so hard. Imagine having to come up with one good mini-docu each week?!

The episode we caught had the tilt's six remaining finalists grouped into three teams of two, and they were flown to Mumbai, India, to shoot documentaries on (for **Joel** and **Philip**) an Indian "laundry" community; (for **Pablo** and **Sharon**) the Kanheri Caves, and (for **Olga** and **Roberta**) the Bollywood movie industry.

Misfortune

With just two days to do everything, the teams were highly stressed, and teammates often clashed. Pablo said Sharon was the most negative person he'd ever had the misfortune of meeting--and Sharon felt even worse about him!

Despite these conflicts, the three four-minute docus were completed on time, and they were judged by two expert film practitioners.

Even better, all three docus were shown in their entirety on the show, so viewers could evaluate them for themselves, and see if they agreed with the judges' verdict.

From where we sat, all three docus were competent and insightful productions, proving that the six remaining finalists were all outstanding filmmaking talents, despite their personal quirks.

But, the judges officially let go of Olga and Roberta, so the next week's telecast will have the four "final-finalists" going one-on-one in an even more daunting challenge. Not only don't they know where they're flying to next, they've also been warned that "the rules have changed How? Secret!

Assignments

We hope that the filmmakers who've participated in "Reel Race" have impressed producers viewing the show, and that they'll be given more filming assignments in the future.

If "Reel Race" will have a Part Two next year, we hope that the show reconsiders its "partnership" format. We know that contestants are paired together to see how they work in tandem, but the resulting stress and conflict sometimes affect the work itself, and make it difficult to judge a contestant on his own filmmaking merits.

It's entirely possible that one teammate has pulled the other down, or vice-versa, so the verdict may not be all that fair to some of the finalists involved.

Aside from that, "Reel Race" is both enjoyable and instructive. Why not catch it next Monday on the Discovery channel?

Mr. & Ms. Magazine

THE DECEMBER issue of Mr. & Ms. Magazine features Sen. **Francis Pangilinan**, wife **Sharon Cuneta** and their children KC, **Frankie** and **Miel** on its cover.

Features include **Christian** and **Solita Monsod** on their family's success secrets, the untold story of Christmas, the powerful Marian Spirit, the effects of the moon on humans, the country's psychic awareness, stories about regression and progression, the eyes as windows to health, the Coconut Cookbook, influential women, Synergy as beauty—and much more!

Santa at Dreamscape

'TIS THE SEASON to be jolly—and greet dear, old Santa Claus at Dreamscape's Centerstage until Dec. 30, 12 noon to 1 p.m., 2 to 3 p.m., and 4 to 5 p.m.

Located at the fourth level of Robinsons Galleria, Dreamscape is a family amusement center with exciting rides, redemption games, etc. Call 636-2911 or 631-7894.

Backstreet Boys

THE BACKSTREET Boys will perform at the Araneta Coliseum on Jan. 20, 2006. Their "Never Gone" act is also the title of their new 12-song album. Call 911-5555.

A lot has happened to the boys in recent years: **Brian Littrel** was the first to become a father. **Kevin Richardson** went to Broadway and London's West End. Nick Carter put up a solo project, **Howie Dorough** continued his work with his Lupus Foundation, while **AJ** Maclean went into rehab.

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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
12:05, 2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:05
PG-13

2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00
GP

3 EXODUS
12:35, 3:05, 5:35, 8:05, 10:35
GP

4 KUTOB
1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

ENTENG KABISOTE: THE LEGEND CONTINUES GP 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10
MULAWIN GP 12:15,2:40,5:05, 7:30,9:55
TERRORIST HUNTER PG13 12:10,2:30,4:50, 7:10,9:30
KUTOB PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10
SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K4 PG13 12:55,3:15,5:35, 7:55,10:15
EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM GP 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00

SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL 898 1440-41.

SHANG CINEPLEX
① ENTENG KABISOTE 2 MTRCB. GP 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
② MULAWIN THE MOVIE MTRCB. GP 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
③ AKO LEGAL WIFE MTRCB. PG-13
④ KUTOB MTRCB. PG-13 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE (CLOSED)
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice
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Watch the 2005 Metro Manila Film Festival starting December 26, 2005 at the Shang Cineplex for only P120.00
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Cinemas 1 to 4 - P150
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Call 633-7851, loc. 171 or 633-2227 / 633-4735 for more details
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CINEMA 3 MULAWIN GP 10:40, 1:00, 3:20, 5:40, 8:00, 10:20
CINEMA 4 AKO LEGAL WIFE - PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50
CINEMA 5 EXODUS - PG13 10:40, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.
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February 3 & 4 NINA&NYOY 9PM
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Araneta Center Leisure Guide
CINEMA SCHEDULES
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DOLBY DIGITAL-EX
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METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL
MULAWIN 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
AKO, LEGAL WIFE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
EXODUS 11:00 / 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50
KUTOB 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 10:40 / 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
TERRORIST HUNTER 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ KUTOB 11:40 / 1:55 / 4:10 / 6:25 / 8:40
❷ TERRORIST HUNTER 11:10 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
❸ MULAWIN 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05
❹ ENTENG KABISOTE 2 11:55 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
❺ AKO LEGAL WIFE 11:20 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40

ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS
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MMFF Movie Star of the Day: MULAWIN The Movie

The movie version of the highly successful television series begins where the TV series ended, in Aguiluz (Richard Gutierrez) and Alwina's (Angel Locsin) decision to embrace a mortal life. A storm separates them at sea and two families rescue themAguiluz takes refuge in the home of a poor farmer while a wealthy family adopts Alwina. As these events unfold, the battle in the land of the Mulawins worsens. An added attraction to the film is the involvement of the fairies and the antagonists of Encantadia, another GMA 7 fantaserye Pirena (Sunshine Dizon) uses the "gintong binhi" to bring Ravenum (Michael de Mesa) back to life. Ravenum wreaks havoc on the land of Mulawin. With their race in peril, the Encantadas and the Tres Aves (legendary heroes with special abilities) rush to aid the Mulawins. But ultimately, the fate of the Mulawin race still lies with two of its two greatest champions, Aguiluz and Alwina. Will they remember who they are before it is too late?

A co-production of Regal Entertainment Inc. and GMA Network Films, "Mulawin The Movie" also stars Dingdong Dantes, Karylle, Iza Calzado, Bianca King, Eddie Gutierrez, Amy Austria, and many more stars.

Feel Like a Star!

See "Kutob," See Your Future!
Watch Kutob on December 28 at SM Cinema Megamall, North Edsa, and Fairview, and know your future! Each movie-goer may ask two questions from a true-blue *Manghuhula* stationed at the cinema lobby.

GUARANTEED SEATS
THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 Ako Legal Wife
2 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)
MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)
CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG
2 Ako Legal Wife
3 Enteng Kabisote 2
MANILA
6 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 KUTOB
7 TERRORIST HUNTER
8 KUTOB
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 KUTOB
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
10 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 TERRORIST HUNTER
2 KUTOB
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 KUTOB
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
6 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
12 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 TERRORIST HUNTER
8 KUTOB
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
10 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 KUTOB
7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY MANILA
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 KUTOB
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 TERRORIST HUNTER
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 KUTOB
11 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
12 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM SAN LAZARO
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
2 KUTOB
3 TERRORIST HUNTER
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

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SM CINEMA

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
6 KUTOB

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 KUTOB

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 TERRORIST HUNTER
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BACOOR
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGD
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARIÑAS
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 KING KONG
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY LUCENA
1 TERRORIST HUNTER
2 KUTOB
3 KING KONG
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
6 KUTOB
7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
8 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 KING KONG
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 KING KONG
3 TERRORIST HUNTER
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

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*FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

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1 KUTOB • THX
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

2 TERRORIST HUNTER
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 ENTENG KABISOTE
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

6 MULAWIN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

7 TERRORIST HUNTER
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 EXODUS
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:15 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00

10 MULAWIN
2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30

ERMITA 538-7809 to 12

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

2 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

3 MULAWIN
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

4 TERRORIST HUNTER
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

5 KUTOB
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

7 EXODUS
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 - 682-8199

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05

2 EXODUS
2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15

3 ENTENG KABISOTE
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

4 MULAWIN
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00

5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05

6 TERRORIST HUNTER
2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15

7 KUTOB
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

8 EXODUS
11:25 1:45 4:05 6:25 8:45

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 EXODUS
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN
6 ENTENG KABISOTE
7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
8 EXODUS

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
2 EXODUS
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 MULAWIN

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3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN
5 EXODUS

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3 KUTOB
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
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3 MULAWIN
4 MULAWIN

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4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 KUTOB
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

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2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 MULAWIN

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2 EXODUS
3 MULAWIN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 KUTOB
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	4 EXODUS			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MULAWIN	2 TERRORIST HUNTER	3 KUTOB	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	5 EXODUS		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	3 MULAWIN	4 TERRORIST HUNTER			

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1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

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Website: www.inq7money.net

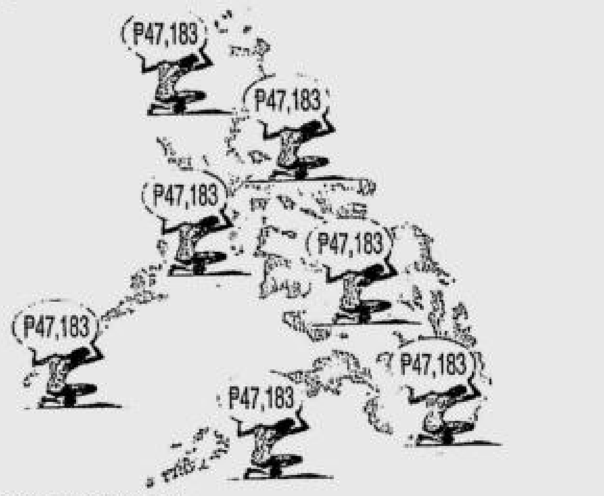
Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

Gov't cuts 2007 economic growth target

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

National government outstanding debt
(January-September 2005)



Sources: Bureau of Treasury, PDI reports

IF THE P4.02-trillion national outstanding debt in the first nine months of the year were divided among the estimated 85.2 million Filipinos in the country, each of us would be burdened with P47,183 in liabilities. Of the 4.02 trillion, 53 percent was borrowed from domestic lenders and the remaining 47 percent, from foreign creditors.

Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research

Due to pressures from high oil prices

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT HAS CUT ITS ECONOMIC GROWTH TARGET for 2007 to a moderate level of between 6.1 and 6.5 percent, although it still sees an improvement from the lower-than-expected growth this year and in 2006.

The interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), tasked with setting the government's economic policies and targets, revised its 2007 target for gross domestic product (GDP), taking into consideration the lingering effects of the risks that are likely to have resulted in a slowdown this year and the challenges confronting 2006.

The GDP growth target for 2007 was changed from the target range of 6.5 percent to 7.5 percent under the Arroyo administration's Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP).

GDP, the most common measure of an economy's performance, is the total value of products and services produced in an economy in a given period.

The revision of the official GDP growth target for 2007 came after the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) earlier announced that the full-year GDP growth for 2005 would likely hover between 4.8 and 5.1 percent compared with the official target of 5.3 to 6.3 percent.

The lower-than-forecast GDP growth this year takes into account the decline in global demand for electronics, which has badly hurt the Philippines' export sector. Electronics account for more than 60 percent of the country's total exports. The unexpected sharp increase in oil prices to record highs this year dampened consumer demand, thus tempering GDP growth.

For 2006, the Neda said GDP expansion was likely to settle between 5.7 and 6.3 percent compared with the target of between 6.3 and 7.3 percent.

The Neda earlier said risks that were seen to have adverse economic effects next year are the political instability that could arise from possible revival of the impeachment case against President Arroyo, lower consumer demand due to the scheduled increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent in February, and the Avian flu scare, among others.

But while the 2007 GDP growth target was revised downward, the figure still reflected an improvement from the expected growth this year and in 2006.

Officials believe growth drivers in 2006

GOV'T/B2

PSALM asked to explain delay in sale of Napocor assets

By Abigail L. Ho

CONGRESS IS POISED TO INQUIRE into the failure of Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) to sell even a single asset of the cash-strapped National Power Corp. this year and into the slow pace of the privatization process.

House energy committee chair and Lanao del Norte Rep. Alipio Cirilo Badelles said PSALM should come up with a valid explanation for not being able to privatize any Napocor plant in 2005, despite all its promises to sell some of the biggest assets this year.

"What went wrong? According to the sequence of plants that were to be disposed, almost 50 percent were scheduled for privatization in 2005. I will demand an explanation from PSALM on why, despite all their assurances and guarantees, they were not able to sell even a single plant," he told the INQUIRER.

Badelles said he would be forced to initiate an inquiry on the matter if PSALM would not be able to come up with a suitable explanation.

For next year, he said much attention should be given to the Napocor privatization process as this had not been moving as fast as expected.

"What I will really push for in 2006 is the Napocor privatization," he said.

In late September, PSALM president Nieves Osorio announced that the government privatization body aimed to sell nine more Napocor power plants before the end of the year.

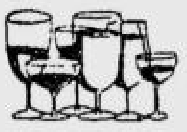
These included decommissioned plants such as the 225-megawatt (MW) Bataan thermal facility, the 200-MW Manila thermal complex, the 104-MW Aplaya and 54-MW Cebu II diesel plants, as well as operational ones such as the 600-MW Calaca coal-fired facility, the 660-MW Tiwi-Makban geothermal complex, the 112-MW Pantabangan-Masiway hydropower plant, the 360-MW Magat hydropower and the 150-MW Bacon-Manito geothermal power facilities.

However, none of these plants were sold.

PSALM has so far sold six Napocor plants—five hydroelectric and one coal-fired. These are the 3.5-MW Talomo plant in Davao for $1.37 million, the 1.6-MW Agusan plant in Bukidnon for $1.53 million, the 1.8-MW Barit plant in Camarines Sur for $480,000, the 0.4-MW Cawayan plant in Sorsogon for US$410,410, the 1.2-MW Loboc plant in Bohol for $1.42 million, and the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired facility for

PSALM/B2

WHAT'S INSIDE



COCKTALES /B2

ALI to sell P252M in bonds /B6

2 firms to invest P2B in Clark /B6

Domestic travel up 20% at Christmas

By Clarissa S. Batino

THANKS TO CHEAPER PLANE fares and increased domestic flights, domestic air travel rose by 20 percent this holiday season, judging from the average passenger volume passing through the domestic airport in Manila.

Manila International Airport Authority general manager Alfonso Cusi said that in the domestic terminal alone of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, daily passenger volume exceeded 12,000 during this Christmas season against less than 10,000 a year ago.

Travel this holiday season exceeded the Naia 1's capacity of 4,500 three times and was twice the Holy Week daily average volume of about 6,000, according to Cusi.

"A lot of airlines have been offering cheaper fares," he said. It also helped that the two biggest local carriers were now using newer planes that could accommodate more passengers and book more flights.

In the first 10 months of the year, the MIAA said that overseas passenger movement went up by 13 percent even if the number of flights rose by only one percent.

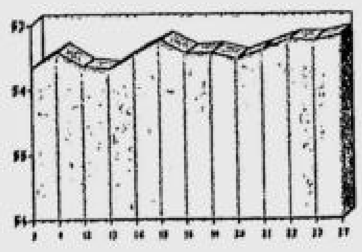
For domestic operations, flight and passenger movements both registered increases of 5 percent and 2 percent, according to the agency which operates the Naia terminals.

Cusi said that from January to October, the agency posted a net income of P713 million, up 38 percent or by P198 million from the same period in 2004.

DOMESTIC/B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

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As of 5 p.m., Dec. 27, 2005

¥ 117.15 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 27, 2005

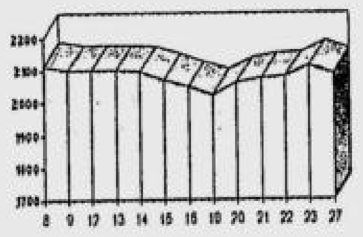
GOLD: $504.50-505.00

per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Stocks end winning streak, fall 1.1%

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

STOCKS FELL YESTERDAY on profit-taking following four consecutive sessions of gains as investors positioned their portfolios for the new year, traders said.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index fell 22.86 points, or 1.1 percent, to 2,088.60. The index had risen 4.3 percent over the past four sessions, including Friday's 1.6 percent advance. Financial markets were closed Monday for the Christmas holiday.

Total volume amounted to 144.7 million shares worth P284.5 million. Losers beat gainers 38 to 28, with 41 stocks unchanged.

The Ayala group of companies dominated the sell-off. Ayala Corp. lost 2.3 percent to P312.50, its affiliate Bank of the Philippine Islands dropped 2.7 percent to P54.50, property unit Ayala Land declined 3 percent to P9.70, and affiliate Globe Telecom shed 2.7 percent to P715.

Select stocks continued to enjoy support from bargain hunters, helping to limit losses. First Philippine Holdings added 1 percent to P49 and Filinvest Land gained 1.5 percent to P1.40.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was the most actively traded stock ending unchanged at P1,815. Food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.'s "A" shares were flat at P64.50 while its "B" shares retreated 50 centavos to P88.

Westlink Global Equities chair Rommel Macapagal said the market pullback wasn't surprising given the market's recent gains, though he added that he isn't ruling out the possibility of ending the year on a positive note.

"The thin volume indicates investors are reluctant to sell. Buyers are just not aggressive, they're just letting prices go down to attractive levels," said Macapagal.

The all-shares index fell 9.54 points to 1,268.05. The commercial-industrial, all shares, banks and financial services and property subindexes retreated. The mining subindicator advanced.

AP, AFP

Tax take from alcohol, tobacco rises

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INternal Revenue's excise tax collection from alcohol and tobacco products improved in November, reaching P3.84 billion, government documents showed.

The collection in November was accounted for by the P1.5 billion worth of excise taxes collected from alcohol products and the P2.34 billion from tobacco products.

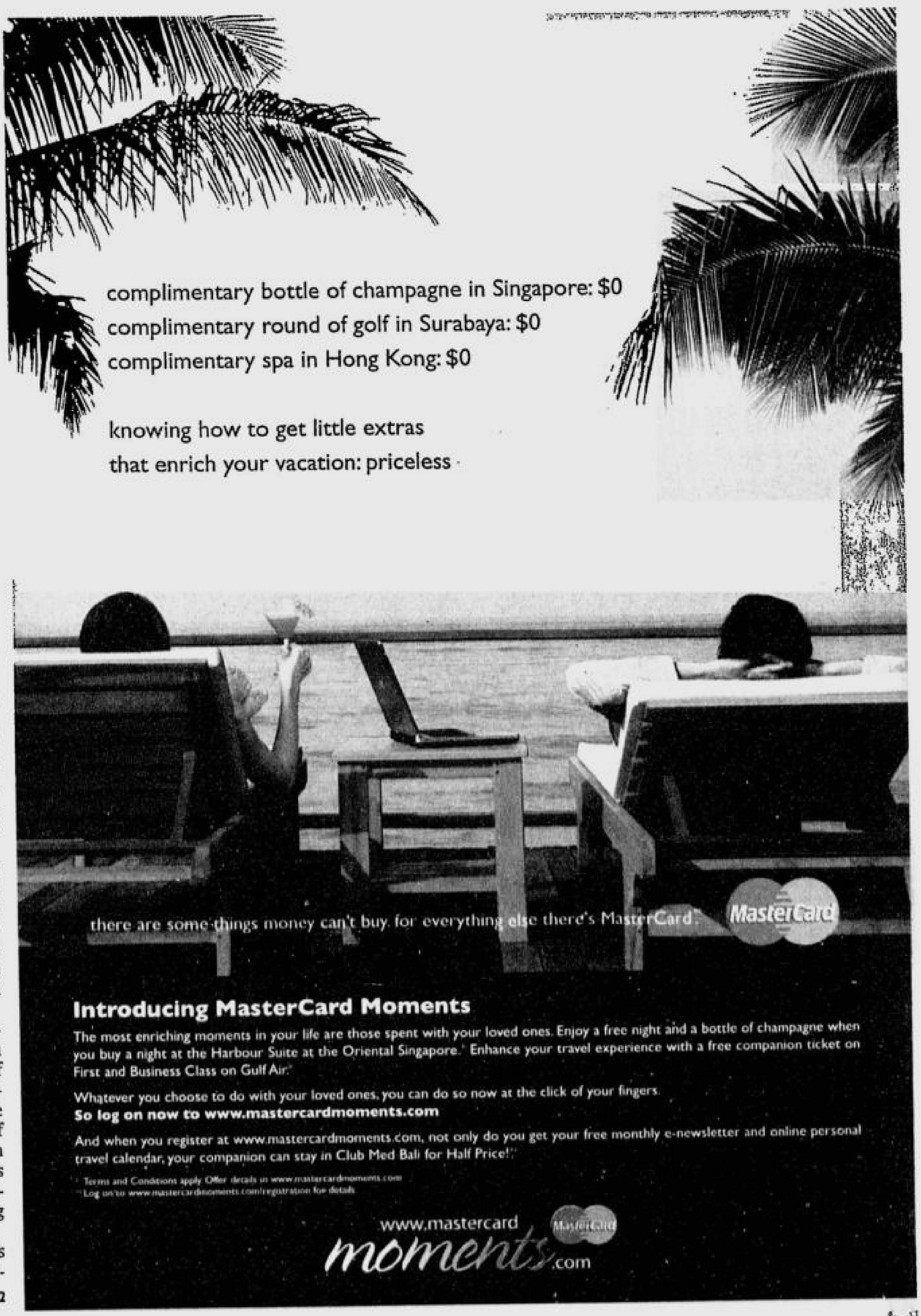
The tax collection from alcohol in November was 1.47 percent higher than the P1.48-billion goal for the month. The collection from tobacco products was 0.93 percent higher than the P2.32-billion target

In the earlier months, the BIR had been falling short of its target revenues from "sin" taxes despite the implementation of the Sin Tax law, or RA 9334, early this year.

The monthly shortfalls were blamed on the frontloading of production by manufacturers prior to the implementation of the new law, which raised excise tax rates on alcohol and tobacco products starting January this year.

Since excise tax is imposed once prod-

TAX/B2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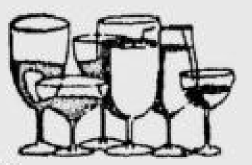
Absent-minded billionaire

COCKTALES



Victor C. Agustin

RESTAURATEUR AND FORMER SOCIETY columnist George Sison had not had a wink of sleep when he attended the pre-Christmas probate hearing on the estate of the late billionaire-Miss Philippines, Pacita Ongsiako de los Reyes-Phillips.

The night owl had been raring to testify that the estate executrix, legal ethics lecturer Victoria de los Reyes, had also forgotten to include in the collation another apartment in the Nob Hill district, said to be bigger and more expensive than her late aunt's known five-bedroom flat in Union Square, also in San Francisco.

De los Reyes had declared to government authorities that her aunt's estate was worth only P100 million, instead of the estimated P2-3 billion she stood to inherit with her lone brother.

An officer of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, De los Reyes was again a no-show in the last hearing before Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Maria Cristina Cornejo, to the disappointment of Sison, who had wanted very much to refresh the memory of his long-time, now billionaire, lawyer-friend.

According to the grapevine, De los Reyes quietly left for the United States before the holidays, apparently in connection with the tax complications that arose from her withdrawal of about $400,000 from her aunt's US deposits right after her death.

The $400,000 represents a joint bank account with the ailing, but estranged husband of her aunt, Dr. Ralph Phillips, whose monthly sustenance in an Ohio retirement home had abruptly stopped, according to Phillips counsel Vicente Chuidian.

Joining the suit with the American husband, the Sison family is also claiming a portion of the estate, on the strength of the "interpersonal relations" and long-time business partnership of their late father, businessman Carlos Moran Sison, and the former beauty queen.

Another hearing has been scheduled for next week.

Taguig's tax treat

TAGUIG Mayor Freddie Tinga and his city council have just given the best holiday gift to the city-based businesses—lower taxes.

Just before Christmas, City Hall passed the new Taguig Revenue Code, which lowers the annual business taxes paid by banks, auto dealers, hotels, concert shows and property companies.

Sponsored by Councilors Glenn San Pedro and congressman-material AP Bartolome, a Georgetown cum laude graduate, the new tax code for instance lowers the annual business tax of auto dealers to 0.16 percent of gross receipts, compared to Makati's 0.6 percent.

According to the grapevine, the new Lexus dealership of Arturo Macapagal will most likely locate its first ever local showroom in The Fort, given the better business climate in Taguig.

And to win the likes of Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons, Taguig has also lowered the annual business tax for luxury hotels to half of that charged by Makati.

Supplier's surplusage

A SUPPLIER of the Robinsons Department Store chain has opened a "surplus" shop beside the now famous, but traffic-and-parking choked-168 Mall.

The strange thing about some of the merchandise is that, not only were they still displaying their Robinsons price tags, they were also still being sold at the original Robinsons prices.

Now why would anyone waste gasoline and time to go to Divisoria to buy unsold Robinsons goods at the same prices?

On the upside, the store, Valueshop, carries shopworn G2000 and U2 merchandise of the previous season, still with their original Hong Kong price tags, at peso prices approximating HK-sale prices.

Wait 'til Cinderella's Therese Coronel-Santos sees this.

Heard through the grapevine

INSURANCE companies are urging their clients to prepay their 2006 premiums if they want to escape the additional 2 percent VAT, which will be collected starting Feb. 1.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

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INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND BID

1. The **PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY** (formerly Public Estates Authority) is inviting all interested parties to prequalify and bid for the lease of twelve (12) pre-selected sites for outdoor billboard advertising along the landstrip of Coastal Road from Barangay Tambo, Parañaque to Barangay Ilaya, Las Piñas City.
2. Qualified Bidders
   a. Any Filipino citizen, of legal age, and
   b. Any partnership, association or corporation, public or private of which at least 70% of the capital stock or of any interest in said capital stock belongs wholly to citizens of the Philippines and which is organized and constituted under the laws of the Philippines.
3. Interested qualified parties may obtain the Terms of Reference and Bid Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of THREE THOUSAND PESOS (P3,000.00) in cash or Manager's/Cashier's check starting **December 22, 2005** until **January 24, 2006** from **9:00 AM to 5:00 PM** at the Marketing Department, 7th Floor Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.
4. The first pre-bid conference is scheduled on **January 18, 2006** at **2:00 PM** at the PRA Conference Room, 8th Floor, Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.
5. Required pre-qualification documents and duly accomplished Bid Documents prescribed in the Terms of Reference shall be submitted to the PRA Real Estates Bids and Awards Committee (PREBAC) on **January 25, 2006** on or before **1:00 PM**. Public opening of bids shall follow at **1:30 PM** of the same day.
6. For further information, inquiries may be made to the Marketing Department in the above address at telephone numbers 817-4711 to 13 (trunk line) and 813-7104 (direct line)

(Sgd.) **TEODORICO C. TAGUINOD**
General Manager/CEO

(PDI–Dec. 16, 19, 28, 2005; Jan. 5, 10 & 16, 2006)

Gov't cuts 2007 . . .

From page B1

will have a residual impact on 2007. These include the continued rise in foreign currency remittances from abroad, further expansion of the call center industry, and rise in private savings that provide funds for investments, and increase in portfolio investment flows.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said its inflation target for 2007 was between 4 and 5 percent to complement the GDP growth target for that year of the DBCC, of which the BSP is consulting agency.

Members of the DBCC include the Deparment of Finance, the Neda and the Department of Budget and Management.

"The prevailing combination of generally favorable supply-side and demand-side factors should help stabilize inflation expectations in the near term. In particular, the recent easing of energy prices, the strengthening of the peso and the ongoing harvest season alongside normal weather conditions are likely to hold back cost-side inflationary pressures," the BSP said in a statement.

The 4- to 5-percent inflation target for 2007 is a slowdown from the 8- to 8.5-percent inflation that the Neda expects for 2006. The 2006 inflation forecast takes into consideration the increase in the VAT rate by 2 percentage points starting February 2006.

Tax take . . .

From page B1

ucts are released from manufacturing plants, manufacturers were said to have produced bigger volumes prior to the effectivity of the "sin" tax law and kept stocks in warehouses.

The improvement in sin tax collection in November indicated that the law already made an impact on BIR collections, although the P15 billion in targeted additional revenues from the tax measure for the full year could no longer be attained.

For the January-to-November period, "sin" tax collection stood at P37.96 billion, of which P15.63 billion was accounted for by alcohol products, and P22.33 was accounted for by tobacco products.

The 11-month "sin" tax collection from alcohol was still 1.32 percent short of the P15.84-billion goal for the period. The January-to-November collection from tobacco was 3.38 percent lower than the P23.11-billion target.

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
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Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City

RO10-2006
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Security Services for NFA-10
Standard Form Number: SF-GOOD-05
Revised on: July 28, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The *National Food Authority, Region 10*, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites security agencies to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : Contracts for the Supply of Security Services for NFA-Region 10
Location : Office and warehouse structures within the jurisdiction of NFA-Region 10 (NFA-Misamis Oriental/Cagayan de Oro City, Camiguin, Bukidnon and Lanao Norte)
Brief Description : Contract involves the supply of security services for CY 2006 to provinces under operational jurisdiction of NFA Region 10 - Northern Mindanao
Contract Duration : March 2006 - March 2007
Delivery Period : March 2006 - March 2007

CONTRACT NO.	PROVINCE	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF GUARDS	MONTHLY RATE PER GUARD	APPROVED BUDGET CEILING
1.	Misamis Oriental/ Cagayan de Oro City	26	P 11,308.29	P 3,528,166.48
2.	Bukidnon/Camiguin	33	P 10,932.23	P 4,329,163.08
3.	Lanao Norte	12	P 11,308.29	P 1,628,393.76

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last three (3) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding and complemented with key personnel and equipment (owned) available for the prosecution of the project. The list of minimum equipment requirement is incidated in the Eligibility Forms. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids, shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluaton of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

ACTIVITIES	ADDRESS	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	2F, NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	Dec. 28, 2005 to Jan. 6, 2006	8:00 AM 5:00 PM Working Days
2. Pre-Bid Conference	Conference Room, 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	Jan. 19, 2006	1:30 PM
3. Deadline for Submission and Receipt of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Documents	Conference Room, 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	Feb. 01, 2006	1:30 PM
4. Opening of Bids	Conference Room, 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	Feb. 01, 2006	1:35 PM

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Five Thousand Pesos Only (P5,000.00) per contract to the Cashier of National Food Authority-Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City.

The National Food Authority, Region 10 assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The ***National Food Authority, Region 10*** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the Bidders.

(Sgd.) **CAMILO D. MAGTRAYO**
BAC-Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 28, 2005 & Jan. 3, 2006)

Domestic . . .

From page B1

The amount was also P200 million higher than the MIAA's forecast for the period due to higher income from operations and interest earnings.

The MIAA gained P373 million on its dollar time deposits due to a stronger peso.

Revenues reached P4 billion during the 10-month period, higher by 4 percent from a year ago but 13 percent or P578 million lower than target.

Operating expenses grew by only one percent at P2 billion but was lower by P475 million against the 10-month program.

Helped by the doubling of domestic terminal fee, the aviation agency will realize higher revenues once it starts collecting a $5 security fee from overseas passengers.

The new fee is still under deliberations, according to Cusi. Once in place, the MIAA would collect about P1.12 billion a year from the security fee, which it would use to buy new X-ray machines.

The agency's revenues started going up in September when it started implementing a P100-increase in domestic terminal fees.

Cusi said the increase in domestic terminal fee, which was now at P200, would add about P300 million to revenues a year.

The MIAA chief said they would continue with income-optimization initiatives and cost-reduction measures to further strengthen the agency's finances in preparation for the huge financial requirement of operating the Naia Terminal 3.

Efforts to improve the domestic terminals are being done while the agency continues to fast-track the opening of the new airport.

PSALM asked . . .

From page B1

$561.74 million.

The privatization agency aims to sell at least 70 percent of Napocor's Luzon and Visayas capacities by the first quarter of next year. It has so far disposed of only 12 percent.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 27, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	20,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	55.5	55.5	54	54.5	514,900
China Banking Corp.	615	615	615	615	300
Citystate Savings Bank	17.75	18	17.75	18	600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.6	0.61	0.6	0.61	640,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	59	59	59	59	16,900
International Exch. Bank	20.5	20.5	20.25	20.25	147,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33	32	32.5	202,000
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	500
Security Bank Corp.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	46,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	32	32	32	32	20,500
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Abacus Financial	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	10,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	17,000
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.91	0.94	0.91	0.94	320,000
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	1,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	735	735	715	715	17,360
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	1,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	1,100,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.45	770,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1820	1820	1810	1815	41,080
Ivantage Corp.	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59	2,650,000
Philweb Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.015	39,600,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	15,000
Manila Electric Co. B	22	22	22	22	28,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.3	125,000
Petron Corp.	4.5	4.5	4.45	4.5	417,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.96	0.96	0.95	0.95	60,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	209,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	51,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.32	1.36	1.32	1.36	140,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.79	0.79	0.77	0.77	1,050,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.35	4.4	4.25	4.25	2,126,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	22.75	23	22.75	22.75	29,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42	41.5	42	71,400
Pancake House Inc.	3.65	3.7	3.65	3.7	47,000
RFM Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	60,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	64	64.5	32,700
San Miguel Corp. B	88	88	87.5	88	140,900
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.75	30,500
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	650,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	317.5	317.5	310	312.5	41,450
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.9	4.85	4.85	32,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	11,200,000
APC Group Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	20,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.82	0.86	0.82	0.86	2,460,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	40,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	80,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.1	8,759,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.97	0.98	0.97	0.98	160,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.18	200,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	110,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	207,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	12,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	48,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48.5	49	48.5	49	100,600
Global Equities Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	200,000
Ionics Inc.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.1	50,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	22	22	22	22	6,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	688,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	10,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	1,700,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.22	1.24	1,652,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	3,530,000
Paxys Inc.	6	6.1	6	6	237,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	371,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	240	238	238	19,610
South China Resources Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	500,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	40,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	50,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1	1.02	1	1	1,522,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	40,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.4	1.4	200,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	5,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series L	11	11	11	11	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	11	11	11	11	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	11	11	11	11	2,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.5	9.6	9.5	9.6	115,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.9	9.9	9.7	9.7	1,258,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.94	1.94	36,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	150,000
Elb Realty Developers Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	40,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.4	1.38	1.4	5,991,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	10,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	630,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.0975	0.0975	0.095	0.095	500,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	200,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	20,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	231,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.3	8.3	8.1	8.3	2,887,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	80,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	90,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.52	1.52	1.5	1.5	105,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	140,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	40,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	5,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.029	3,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	15,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.36	1,430,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.72	1.76	1.72	1.74	6,524,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27.5	28.5	27.5	28.5	322,800
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	1,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	130,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	500,000

DISCLOSURES

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. listed an additional 11,068 common shares on Dec. 27, bringing the total number of shares available under the company's Senior Management Stock Option Plan to 66,904 common shares.

***

A BROWN Co. Inc. repurchased 100,000 shares at P0.97 per share on Dec. 23.

***

SEMIRARA Mining Corp. repurchased on Dec. 23 a total of 199,200 shares: 39,200 shares at P26.50 each; 135,000 shares at P27 each, and 25,000 shares at P27.50 each.

***

CITIVEST Asia Ltd. on Dec. 23 transferred, sold or conveyed 34.5 million shares each to the following companies: Sinojade Ltd., Green Target Ltd., Suncentury Asia Ltd., Prowealth Asia Ltd. and Clariwealth Investment Ltd. for a total of 172.5 million shares at P0.30 each.

***

APEX Mining Co. Inc. wrote off its P42.3-million nonmoving liabilities and P70.6-million net deferred costs, and transferred all its liabilities to Puyat, Jacinto and Santos on Dec. 23. ***Compiled by Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

December 27, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.844024	1.000000	53.2640
Japan	Yen	0.007266	0.008609	0.4585
United Kingdom	Pound	1.463116	1.733500	92.3331
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108870	0.128989	6.8705
Switzerland	Franc	0.642332	0.761035	40.5358
Canada	Dollar	0.720772	0.853971	45.4859
Singapore	Dollar	0.507135	0.600853	32.0038
Australia	Dollar	0.613881	0.727326	38.7403
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.239386	2.653224	141.3213
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.225068	0.266660	14.2034
Brunei	Dollar	0.505615	0.599053	31.9080
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000101	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020652	0.024468	1.3033
UAE	Dirham	0.229804	0.272272	14.5023
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.184800	63.1072
Argentina	Peso	0.279942	0.331675	17.6663
Brazil	Real	0.363334	0.430478	22.9290
Denmark	Kroner	0.134078	0.158856	8.4613
India	Rupee	0.018710	0.022168	1.1808
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223346	0.264620	14.0947
Mexico	New Peso	0.078962	0.093554	4.9831
New Zealand	Dollar	0.567259	0.672088	35.7981
Norway	Kroner	0.124675	0.147715	7.8679
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014136	0.016748	0.8921
South Africa	Rand	0.133054	0.157642	8.3966
Korea	Won	0.000833	0.000987	0.0526
Sweden	Kroner	0.105786	0.125335	6.6758
Syria	Pound	0.016259	0.019264	1.0261
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025476	0.030184	1.6077
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000393	0.000466	0.0248

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MOTORIN
Text us your feedback: inquirer mtr name/age/city/message to 2207 (Glob
angawang

Hyundai unveils affordable diesel-powered sedan

DIESEL-POWERED Accent

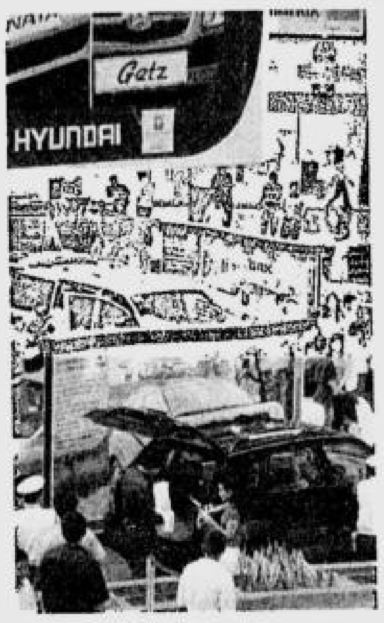
Text by Charles E. Buban
Photos by Rudy Esperas

WHILE DIESEL-powered sedans have been around for quite a while now, a lot of them are priced at a level beyond the reach of most people.

Why? Because the technologies to make these cars give off less pollutants, deliver impressive mileage and perform like any other gasoline-powered cars in terms of noise and vibration levels as well as acceleration took their car manufacturers a lot of years, talent and even money to develop.

Lately however, Hyundai has made leaps in making its diesel-run vehicles astonishingly quick, refined and without sacrificing fuel economy or having you break or rob the bank just to buy them.

"Hyundai realized the need for a reasonably priced vehicle with cutting-edge diesel technology. For years, the company has successfully integrated these diesel engine technologies in its vehicles that range from multipurpose vehicles (Matrix) to family vans (Starex) and sports-utility vehicles (Tucson). Lately, the company decided to add one more in the lineup—the latest generation Hyundai Accent," said Fe Agudo, managing director of Hyundai Asia Resources Inc. (Hari), the brand's exclusive distributor here.


HARI recently held a Hyundai motorshow featuring among others, its diesel-run line of vehicles.

Mid-sized sedan

The Accent, a mid-sized sedan, is a 1.5-liter sedan that runs on a common-rail direct-injection (CRDi) diesel engine, and at a reasonable P748,000 price tag.

Its variable geometry turbocharged diesel engine was a product of collaborative effort between Hyundai (South Korea) and its research and development facility in Russelheim, Germany.

Working on a patented "direct-injection" technology, Hyundai's CRDi engine design, simply put, has "rails" that inject pressurized fuel directly into the engine, thereby improving engine efficiency and reducing noise and vibration.

Environment friendly

The CRDi technology also electronically controls engine pressure, fuel quantity and injection timing to deliver better fuel efficiency. As a result, nitrogen oxide (Nox) and particulate emissions is lowered, making the Accent one of the most environment-friendly diesels in its class.

"Common-rail diesels have found its way first into luxury cars and only lately into mass-market vehicles. This will be the first time it is being made available in the Philippines, at this price range and in this vehicle category," Agudo said.

While most diesel engine-powered vehicles are perceived to be noisy, highly pollutive and have very uncomfortable riding qualities, the CRDi diesel engine, on the other hand, combines the performance and handling of a gasoline engine with the fuel efficiency of a diesel.

Higher pulling power

"It also maintains the diesel engine characteristic of having a higher pulling power (than gasoline)," Agudo said.

The 6th generation Accent also hits the streets with its clean and modern exterior styling as well as comfortable and stylish interiors.

"The new Accent was designed to maximize interior room—its tall windows, generously sized bucket seats and multilevel console all contribute to an overall impression of spaciousness," described Agudo.

Available in six colors (ebony black, space silver, midnight gray, wine red, gold beige, and blue onyx), the new Accent offers great value-for-money package, with sophisticated diesel engine technology and comfortable amenities for its buyers, Agudo promised.

Looking forward to 2006

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

AT AROUND THIS TIME, THIS column comes out with a fearless forecast for the following year as car enthusiasts have a lot to look forward to despite the usual post-Christmas economic blues and volatile oil price swings.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. (HCPI) will launch the all-new, sleeker, sportier-looking Honda Civic, probably in the first quarter of 2006. The big question is whether HCPI will field the snazzy four-door hatchback bound for Europe or the roomy, extended-wheelbase sedan to be sold in the United States. Since 2005 was marked by the return of the hatchback in Manila—a dozen are in the market today—why not the sharp-looking hatch?

Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. (TMPC) has a sure winner coming up in the much-anticipated bigger, more powerful RAV4. Again, the question arises as to which version will be marketed here: the 2.4-liter Euro or the V6 US with the optional third row of seats? Whichever version TMPC chooses, one thing is certain: the passenger cabin will have more room to improve the RAV4's rating in that aspect.

Nismo

At its Christmas party for the motoring media a week ago, Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. (NMPI) unveiled the Nismo Nissan X-Trail, a souped-up version of the hot-selling compact SUV. Nismo, if you don't know it yet, stands for Nissan Motorsports, the performance division of Nissan Motor Co. that was formed in 1984. It designs and manufactures factory-tuned after-market performance components for Nissan cars such as aero kits, engine internals and suspension parts. The most awesome Nismo machine is the 450 hp, twin-turbo V6, all-wheel-drive Skyline GT-R, which slings from zero to 60 miles per hour in less than four seconds. The Skyline GT-R Z-Tune, the complete Nismo version, packs 500 hp.

But I digress. One wonders: will the Nismo X-Trail be equipped with Nismo Bilstein off-road performance shocks designed for off-road racing, same as the Nissan Frontier Nismo Edition being sold in the United States? Speaking of that Nismo pickup, Nissan fans hope that it will be launched by Universal Motors Corp. sometime in 2006 to give the Toyota Hilux and Isuzu D-MAX stiffer competition.

The Nismo Sentra GSX may also be unveiled next year, but it will have more esthetics-oriented modifications than performance tuning. The Nissan Murano, a car-based medium-size SUV powered by a 3.5-liter V6 engine mated to a continuously variable transmission (CVT), is scheduled for the Philippine market in 2006.

New Galant

Meanwhile, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC) plans to launch next year the long-overdue Galant which was totally redesigned in 2004. The top-of-the-line Galant is the 3.8-liter V6 GTS. MMPC will also bring in the 120-hp Lancer 2.0 liter and the all-new Strada pickup. But the Outlander compact SUV, which was revamped for 2006 and unveiled at the Tokyo Motor Show last October, will probably not be available here until 2007.

While almost everyone is focusing on bigger vehicles with more powerful engines and higher profit margins, Ford Motor Philippines Co. will invest P1.1 billion to put up a factory manufacturing flexible fuel engines that can run on gasoline or a combination of gasoline and bio-ethanol fuel. Ford announced its plan here 11 days after production of the first Ford F-150 flexible-fuel vehicles (FFVs) began at Ford's Kansas City plant. Ford is committed to produce 250,000 FFVs next year in the United States including the Crown Victoria, Mercury Marquis and Lincoln Town Car.

One million

Ford claims to have more than one million FFV cars and trucks on the road worldwide. In Sweden last July, Ford launched the 1.8-liter Focus FFV and the Focus C-MAX FFV. The Focus FFVs are now also sold in Germany while Ford FFV plants are underway in France, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain. So a Focus FFV is definitely in our future, probably in 2007.

Ford's FFV initiative is most welcome as it will promote our country's Energy Independence Agenda. FFVs will help reduce our dependence on imported oil, revive our sugar and coconut industries, lessen air pollution and increase dollar earnings as 80 percent of the flexible fuel engines will be exported.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Wear short sleeves. Support your right to bare arms.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

COMING in 2006: the Nissan X-Trail Nismo

The Ten Best of 2005

(Last of two parts)

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT 2005's last installment of "My Drift" cites the brightest developments of the past year. In our nation's never-ending roller-coaster ride of sharp peaks and vast lows, we can seriously look to the automobile when there is a need to contrast the bright against the gloom.

5 More manual transmissions—Didn't it seem only like yesterday that the standard five-speed stick was going the way of white-sidewall balloon tires? It got to a point that very decent cars with competent power plants were being held back by the need to equip everything with a slush box. Worse still was the notion that the semiautomatic, +/- system was the great compromise that would make our manual cravings go away. Ladies and gentlemen, short of actual sequential gearboxes, there is no method that will ever suffice to replace a good manual.

So it seems that the clutch pedal is coming back into fashion and it has saved quite a few platforms from obscurity. The three most indebted to a manual gear-change are probably the 4M40 Mitsubishi Montero, the 2.4-liter Honda CRV and the Hyundai Matrix CRDi. Thank heavens for small mercies.

4 Ford Focus 2.0 Sport—Psst... hey mister, wanna buy a rally car? In the same way you would be approached by someone spurious selling an excellent reproduction of a performance timepiece, getting this vehicle for the purpose of any WRC-style ability is equally suspect. Let's just make that clear, sans the incongruent imaging the Focus Mk.2 is a very decent vehicle that hits quite a few notes really well. Handling and road-feel is top-shelf, giving this Ford a clear advantage over its equally docile competition. Fit and finish is also rather remarkable and executes the Euro-spartan theme very well.

What is my biggest gripe with this five-door hatch? Please look above at entry No. 5. Other than that, this practical compact gets most everything else done.

3 Toyota Fortuner—The biggest question about this vehicle is: how can any car be worth a wait this long? Last week at a Toyota dealership, the salesperson was happy to inform me that the waiting period was only, "Six months *na lang*, sir." Honestly, even if it is making every fiber in my body ache, the answer seems to be yes. In the short time that it has taken this IMV iteration to overpopulate our streets, the steadily growing numbers of owners are quite happy with their purchases.

Wait a minute, wouldn't you be happy too if one had waited quite long for something? While most display their pride because of the fact that the long wait is over, some owners have gone on to love their Fortuners because the vehicle is actually a solid product. If only for the 3.0 common-rail, direct injection turbocharged and intercooled diesel engine that graces the engine bay, this car is worth a perusal.

2 BMW E90 3 Series—My counterparts in the world media put this car's arrival into very good perspective. The previous version, the E46, was to many the apex of the compact European sedan. One even went on to say that the 3-Series is everything anyone would ever want from a small car. They liked it that much. Logically, as newer models came from the competition, the banner of this wonderful little Bimmer began to lose some wind; the cars from Ingolstadt's four-ringed circus tapped to be the main culprits in this coup.

Then the E90 was launched, the quality of which has been confirmed by these very hands and feet, and not by some tall English bloke with long curly hair and an annoying penchant for being almost most always correct. A three-day launch, complete with a 280-km cannonball through Southern Spain and hot laps on a circuit cannot lie. This is a good car, a very good car indeed. While I would do very sick and depraved things for the six-speed manual, 258-bhp, 6.3 second to 100km/h 330i E90 sedan, common sense (and common decency) point to the 320d turbo, 7.8 seconds to 100, which can also be had with a six-speed stick.

1 Honda Jazz 1.5 VTEC—I am a Jazz owner. I own the 1.3-liter, iDsi fuel miser, with the 7-speed CVT. I love my car. Yet in the back of my head looms the notion of owning the same, uber-utility vehicle with a bigger, more capable engine. While the cars are not night and day opposites of each other, the 1.5-liter VTEC Jazz is the dramatic sunset compared to the lazy noontime that is the 1.3-liter iDsi. The 20 odd horses difference between the two cars, while quite distinct, is never mind blowing.

It really boils down to what you need in a practical everyday car. If fuel efficiency is key and you'd rather have this in a driving package that is at least palatable, it's the small engine for you. A good balance between frugal and fun is what the 1.5-liter engine is all about. More than just an outstanding product for consumers, this small five-door hatch hopefully serves notice to the other manufacturers of what the very near automotive future looks like. It is more a signal of what is inevitable in the motoring industry and for that, it rightfully deserves top spot for 2005.

Parties to live by

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

FOR ITS UTTER CANDIDNESS and frankness, the letter below is allowed to usurp the space reserved for my last column of the year. What a feat! Anyway, it's always better to give than to receive.

Dear Al,

Last time we were together with Sir John Isla, we were defending the country's honor [at the buffet table at Imperial Hotel] from bully boy Latin Americans and regaining our country's pride of place [in an interview queue] against some upstart Indo-Chinese. I know that the Fil-Am Golf tourney at the Baguio Country Club is your annual pilgrimage, having you miss a few good press parties in Manila.

The Nissan one, despite their budget constraints, was full of heartfelt good cheer and you can feel that there was a genuine desire for us to all have a good time. Even if one didn't go home with a prize, one felt good that there was an honest desire that we all would win, making us all feel just as good as the winners. The piñata finale was a nice touch.

The Isuzu party that you missed was also like that. Admittedly more lavish, it was focused on the motoring press. The best part was the surprise parody in photo of some of our colleagues that Art Balmadrid wittily presented. It seemed to me though that the object of parody were the Tarsiers rather than our higher mammal friends. Doubtless, the Mitsubishi party, will also be in the same spirit. Those boys and girls from Cainta must really believe that there is a Santa Claus and that is them.

You missed the Goodyear 50th anniversary party, which had a lot of history intertwined and a format just like Cito Beltran's talk show. It was fun too.

Some parties though, were the kind you would have been happy staying away from—unless getting soused in cramped and noisy bars is your idea of a Christmas party. It doesn't have to be Christmas to do that anyway. It's a pity sometimes that even the companies with the best products and standard setter PR girls and boys, somehow lose it because of some officer with a sour attitude toward some of our colleagues.

There was a cocktail party that you missed where the bar was purposely closed just as the speeches were beginning. It's a good thing the awardees did not have to be toasted for I were to believe some of our friends in the broadsheets, thin air would have been an appropriate toast. You should have seen the professional hotel staff who were squirming every time they were asked why they were not serving drinks.

There was another party where the abundance of drinks led to a loosening of attitudes and the lowering of the guard. I pity the invited guest, some guy from a poor little rich kid's magazine. The seething hostility from one of the hosts was there for all to see. The fellow should have just stayed in the office, unless of course the same sourness was really a feeling of contempt for us in the motoring press, who should all be treated wholesale, like the drunkards some of us are. You know the kind you put in a cramped bar, blast with loud music and give prizes that the guests would not feel so bad leaving behind.

I wonder if the company's corporate credo has this as part of their liberation theology or social injustice crusade to sneer at invited guests, just because they happen to be rich kids? The same rich kids that buy their high margin products. And the prizes? If one just feels like being cheap and forced to give, just don't give at all, I say. Ya can't force the unwilling to be willing, right?

I'm looking forward to next year, where we will feel at home in Sir John's genuine hospitality. I guess the best Christmas present for all of us is the truth—to know who our real friends are. Merry Christmas, my friend!

Tito Hermoso

* * *

Happy New Year!

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

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In Compliance with RA 7041

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Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1"x1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
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8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

*Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ANTONIO Ro. HERRERA has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs before Notary Public BEBENE G. CARRERA of Quezon City as per Doc#150, Page#31, Book# I Series of 2005.
(PDI- Dec. 21, 28 & Jan. 04, 2005)

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"Come
to Me,
all you
who are
weary and
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and I will
give you
rest."

Matthew 11:28

COSME S. PASCUAL

September 26, 1926 – December 26, 2005

Died in the Grace of our Lord at the age of 79.

He is survived by his children **LUDY & WILLIAM, JOSIE & YUL, MARLYN & BOYET, WILSON & REMY, ERNIE & PRESCY, JR & SHERYLL, CECILLE & JOEL**, and grandchildren.

His body lies in state at St. Ignatius Funeral Homes at corner of EDSA and Santolan Rd., Quezon City until today, December 28 and will be transferred to Norzagaray, Bulacan tomorrow, December 29.

His relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 31, 2005, 2:00 p.m. at the Roman Catholic Cemetery in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

Our Dearly Beloved Papa

SERGIO C. ROJO, SR.

Peacefully joined our Creator on December 26, 2005 at the age of 99.

His wife Luisa (†); children Dr. Sergio Jr. & Dr. Luz, Antonio & Purificacion, Sabina, Helen & Lito (†), Bong & Nora; grandchildren and great grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 31, 2005 at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

"We will miss you Papa!"

DEATH NOTICES

MARIO PUÑADO-PAN

of Buyo, Goa, Camarines Sur

Died on Dec. 20, 2005 at the age of 84.

Interment will be on Dec. 30, 2005 at 9 a.m. at Goa Catholic Cemetery, Goa, Camarines Sur.

ROMEO T. ANCHETA

of Brgy. 36 Aranin, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte

Died on December 20, 2005.

Interment today at the provincial cemetery after the 8 a.m. Mass.

GUILLERMO AQUINO BECINA

Retired DECS Schools Superintendent for Province of Laguna and San Pablo City

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on Christmas Day, December 25, 2005.

Interment will be on December 29, 2005, Thursday, at 2 p.m. at the Garden of Peace Memorial Park, Bagumbayan, Sta. Cruz Laguna, following a Holy Eucharistic celebration of God's gift of eternal life unto him.

VIRGILIO ARO MERCADO

Born: September 11, 1939
Died: December 23, 2005

His bereaved wife, **Estrellita Mercado**; children, **Gil & Rhoda**, **Jerry & Monina**, **Freddy & Liza**, and **Angelita**; grandchildren; **Rhobert, Ghildha, Gabrielle, Ian & Joshua**; brothers & sisters, **Meo, Nini, Linda, Lita, Rey, Melda, Mameng & Victor**; parents, **Roberto & Luisita**; and other relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the family residence in Bgy. Buli, Taal, Batangas.

Interment will be on December 30, 2005 at the Taal Municipal Cemetery after the 9:30 a.m. Mass service at the Taal Basilica, Taal, Batangas

For more information, pls. call Freddy at 0920-9220429 or Jerry at 0906-3347350.

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ATTY. FRANCISCO LEDESMA DAGÑALAN

Beloved husband of Ana Alejano - Dagñalan

His body lies in state at the
St. Peter Chapels,
296 Quezon Avenue, Q. C.

Interment will be on Saturday,
December 31, 2005,
at the Everest Memorial Park,
Susana Heights, Muntinlupa
after the 8:00 am requiem Mass
at San Lorenzo Ruiz Chapel
of St. Peter, Q.C.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

EPIMACO VIRAY CIRERA, JR.

"Serge"

Peacefully joined his Lord and Creator on December 24, 2005 at the age of 54.

His loving wife **Gigi**; daughters **Paula Andrea** and **May Anne Paulette**, mother **Neri Cirera**; brothers **Canuto** (†) and **Patrick**; sisters **Bernadette** and **Celina**; parents-in-law **Andres** and **Polly So**; brothers and sisters-in-law **Grace, Jelly** and **Chuck, Lingling, Boy** and **Vanessa, Teem** and **Bernie**, nephews and nieces, and other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Imperial Chapel, Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Quezon City on December 29, 2005 at 9:00 a.m., following a Holy Eucharist celebration of God's gift of eternal life unto Him.

"We know that God raised the Lord Jesus from death. He will raise us to life with Jesus. He will present us, along with you, to God." *2 Corinthians 4:14*

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that PHILIPPINE MOVEMENT DISORDER SURGERY CENTER INC. is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as New Provider of Specialized Medical Service with project/plant site located at Cardinal Santos Medical Center, Wilson Street, San Juan, Metro Manila.

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) **RUDY B. CAÑA**
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI–Dec 28, 2005)

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BID BULLETIN No. 1

Bidding for the NFA Central Office Renovation Works

For the information and guidance of all prospective bidders, the following amendments to the bidding schedule are hereby set:

1. Last day to buy bidding documents	-	December 29, 2005
2. Last day of issuance of bidding documents	-	December 29, 2005
3. Pre-Bid Conference	-	January 3, 2006
4. Submission of Eligibility Documents, Technical and Financial Proposals	-	January 16, 2006; 9:45 AM
5. Opening of Eligibility Documents, Technical and Financial Proposals	-	January 16, 2006; 10:00 AM

Issued this 27th day of December 2005.

(Sgd.) **PEDRO S. HERNANDO, JR.**
Deputy Administrator and BAC Chair

(PDI - Dec 28, 2005)

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Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – Dec. 28, 2005 & Jan. 4, 2006)

2 firms to invest P2B in Clark

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—TWO companies signed recently new investment contracts worth almost P2 billion with the Clark Development Corp.

CDC president Antonio Ng said the memorandum of agreement inked with the International Aviation Group has called for the establishment of a training facility for commercial airline pilots handling Airbus.

Ng said the IAG investments on a full flight simulator and single engine planes amount to P885 million. The project, he said, would be fully operational June 2006.

He said the MOA with the Paradise Island Group agreed to the construction of a third casino in Clark at a cost of more than P1 billion starting January.

Paradise plans to hire 600 employees.

The entry of IAG, he said, has boosted the aerotropolis (airport-based growth area) feature of Clark, which is home to the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport.

Clark, a 2,500-hectare former United States military airport, remains one of the biggest in the Asia-Pacific region. It is fitted with two 3.2-kilometer runways.

From five international flights a week since late 2004, the DMIA now hosts 39 flights a week to six Southeast Asian cities, Ng said.

Thai Air Asia is scheduled to begin its flights to Bangkok in January, he said.

"We plan to expand the existing passenger terminal for completion by June 2008," Ng said.

Malaysia's AirAsia Berhad and Singapore's Tiger Airways Ltd. have been operating from Clark since April.

These carriers have already increased their flights to keep up with the demand.

Before the two budget carriers, Korea's Asiana Airlines was the only commercial carrier using the Clark airport. Asiana had not only increased flights in Clark but had also started flying to the Mactan Cebu International Airport. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

ALI to sell ₱252M in bonds

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY GIANT AYALA LAND INC. will sell to the public next year P252 million in exchangeable bonds to encourage retail investors to invest in affordable housing projects.

In a prospectus submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), ALI proposed to issue the bond in a series over a period of three years, starting Jan. 23 next year at 5 percent interest.

ALI has tapped BPI Capital Corp. as issue manager and underwriter for the bond offer.

To make the bonds more affordable to the target low and middle-income earners, ALI proposes to issue the bond in 36 consecutive monthly series of approximately P7 million a series.

Each investor may invest a minimum of P5,000 a series equivalent to a total of P180,000 or a maximum of P25,000 a series equivalent to a total of P900,000.

ALI will use the proceeds of the bond—estimated at P242 million less expenses—for "general corporate purposes".

ALI said the 5 percent interest will give prospective investors a chance to earn more than the traditional savings account—which yields 1 to 1.5 percent for an initial deposit of P5,000—or time deposit—which earns a gross rate of between 4.75 to 5.75 percent.

Sources said the bond would give retail investors the option to either get their money back or use it as down payment on a residential property developed by ALI or any of its affiliates.

This is the first time ALI will issue exchangeable bonds to lure retail—not institutional— investors.

Community Innovations Inc., ALI's middle-income housing subsidiary, earlier launched Verdana Homes in 2002 as its maiden project.

CII also launched the first of a 3-tower residential complex, The Columns, in November 2002.

In February 2004, CII introduced Verdana Mamplasan.

As of September 2005, 52 percent of 417 lots and 22 percent of 36 house and lots have been taken up.

Two projects launched in November 2005 are expected to further bolster revenues from middle-income housing: The Columns on Legaspi in Makati and Celadon Residences in Manila.

ALI, through its mass housing arm Laguna Properties Holdings Inc. (LPHI), meanwhile, continued to widen its range of products as it ventured into low-cost housing in the third quarter of 2000.

It also built farm estate lots in 2002 and mid-rise condominiums in the second quarter of 2003.

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LA SUERTE RICE MILL

BOI grants tax break to co-generation plant

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS HAS granted a four-year tax holiday to a facility that generates power and steam by burning rice husk.

Trade Undersecretary and BOI managing head Elmer C. Hernandez said the P154.9-million co-generation plant was given a pioneer status, which qualifies proponent La Suerte Rice Mill for fiscal and non-fiscal incentives aside from the tax break.

Hernandez said the BOI referred the project to the Department of Energy as part of the process of granting pioneer status to energy projects.

Under the 2005 Investment Priorities Plan, power generation projects using renewable energy sources, as well as co-generation project, shall be classified as pioneer in status.

Projects with pioneer status are entitled to a six-year tax holiday.

Hernandez said the project secured last November a certificate of endorsement from the DOE, which said the power plant should enjoy incentives in line with the policy of encouraging the private sector to promote the development, use and commercialization of non-fossil fuel based, renewable energy systems and technologies in the country.

The planned facility would use La Suerte's waste rice hull from its mill in San Manuel town in Isabela.

The mill will be the sole user of the plant's steam output of 1.62 metric tons an hour and electricity yield of up to 1 megawatt.

Also, excess power output would be sold to the nearby Green Harvest Rice Mill.

The lone owner of La Suerte, Reynaldo Tan, would fund the project with P38.7 million in equity and P116.2 million in borrowings.

La Suerte's co-generation plant, which would run round-the-clock, six days a week, is expected to improve the quality and reliability of power supply for the rice mill.

It will also lower the cost of power and of rice husk disposal; meet the new demand for power and steam with the ongoing expansion of the mill; possibly create new revenue from the sale of rice husk ash; and possibly bring in revenue from the sale of carbon credits.

The so-called carbon credits, or greenhouse gas emission reduction credits, is a mechanism where developed countries that could not reduce their GHG output—as spelled out in the Kyoto Protocol—could buy credits from projects in developing countries.

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Hello and goodbye

The year that was in music overflowed with great breakthroughs and sad farewells

By Maui V. Reyes
2bU! Correspondent

IT WAS ALL ABOUT HEARTBREAK, pain and trying to get together with your ex—sung by boys armed with guitars and puppy-dog faces.

If you haven't mastered the "I just got out of bed but don't I look unexplainably sexy with my bed-head hair and month-old jeans" look, or found yourself singing a Sarah Gerónimo tune or two, then music in 2005 must have passed you by.

But the good news for general OPM is, things will only get better from here. So don't feel like you've missed the last train.

"Pop stations' playlists are now 70 to 80 percent OPM," said Sony-BMG label manager Jade Maravillas. "Last year, it was about 60 percent foreign, 40 percent OPM."

The ones who made the most noise

Call them alternative, call them "*gwapo* rock," or call them annoying. Whatever you want to classify them as, fresh-out-of-college bands topped almost every chart in the country.

HELLO/ C2

GOT SODA?
Bamboo gives his all for Pepsi's ad campaign.

CUESHE

Cebu band Cueshe was born in 1998, but only burst into the Manila music scene middle of this year with the single, "Stay," from its debut album "Half Empty, Half Full." Admittedly starting out as a show band, the group's name comes from the members' chowing down on banana cues during rehearsal and as a tribute to their first vocalist who was female. Drummer Mike Manoloto talks about their breakthrough year.

Did you expect to get this famous?

No. *Iniisip namin*, '*may* offer *ang* BMG, *punta tayo* sa Manila.' We wanted to record the album *para lang matatak namin* in history na we have a band. *Hindi namin inisip na sisikat kami*. Before, we'd watch the MTV Awards on TV. *Nung tinawagan kami to perform, yung feeling parang, "Pare, 'di ba dati nanonood lang tayo nito?"* In Cebu, it's different. There are no TV or radio guestings like in Manila. When you're in Manila, the response is nationwide.

What was the highlight of 2005 for you?

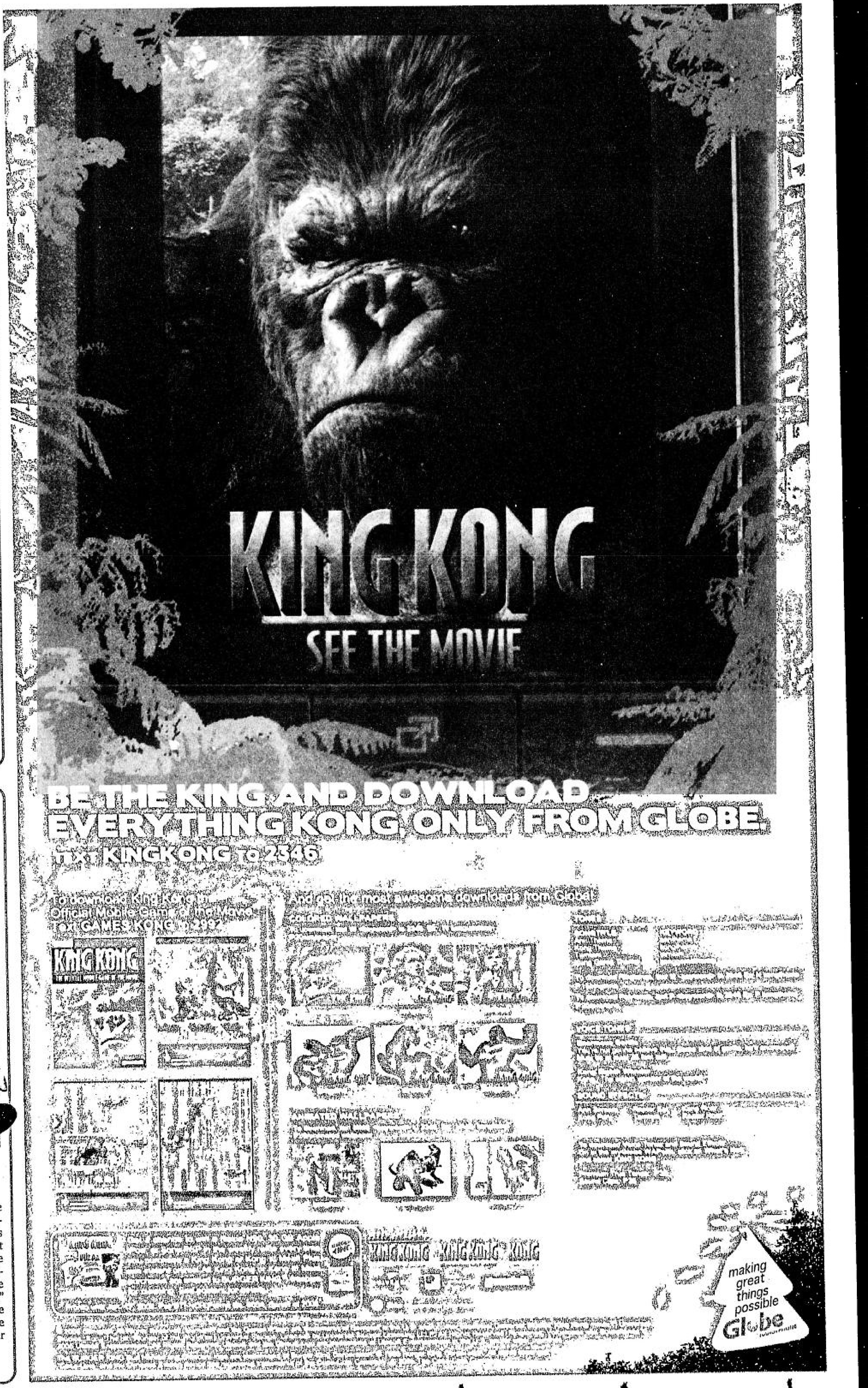
Mahirap. Pwedeng sabihin na MTV Awards. *Pwedeng* SOP Awards. And *daming nangyari sa amin* in such a short period of time.

What can we expect from Cueshe in 2006?

I don't want to give away all our plans, because I might jinx them. But the next album will definitely be lighter. *Masyadong mabigat yung guitars sa unang album, eh. Medyo maingay.*

ORANGE AND LEMONS

NU 107.5 named the band Artist of the Year at this year's Rock Awards, after being named Best New Artist last year. Its first major label album, "Strike Whilst the Iron is Hot," spun the hit single "Hanggang Kailan." Product endorsements soon followed. Let's not forget the majorly overplayed song, "Pinoy Ako." the lyrics which the guys wrote for the "Pinoy Big Brother" reality show (the music composition would be another story).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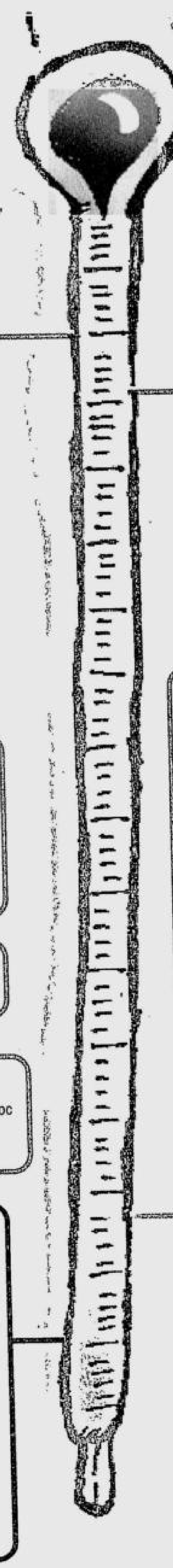
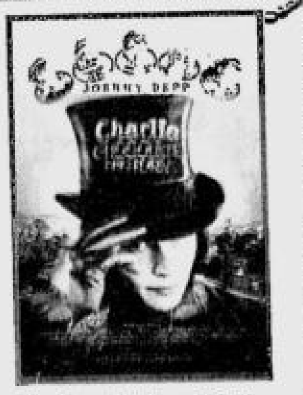
2BU! READERS' YEARENDER SURVEY

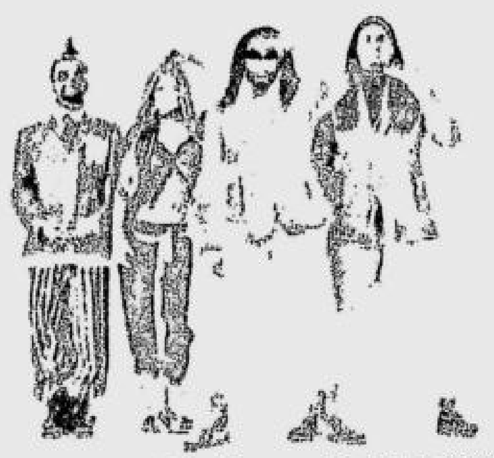
The best and worst of 2005

For weeks, we asked you to submit your votes for the best and the worst of the year that was. They've been tallied, and here are the results




JOHNNY DEPP
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

You loved Johnny Depp, you loved the Oompah Loompahs and you loved your sugar. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" was voted movie of the year.



Fergie rocked. Black Eyed Peas won Best Band of 2005.

Gwen Stefani sang her way to your hearts. She was voted Best Singer of 2005.

You loved those loveseats. Greenbelt 3 Cinemas were your cinemas of choice for 2005.

The passion for fashion. Chandelier earrings were voted Best Accessory of 2005 while Havaianas were chosen as the Best Trend of 2005.

No visa needed. 2bU! readers think Embassy is paradise for the palate. It's also one hot nightspot that has people lining up even at 4 a.m.

Ayos! MTV was voted Best Music Channel. The crossover was successful. Marc Abaya was voted Best VJ of the year.

"Pinoy Big Brother" was a close second. It's a guilty pleasure, many readers admitted.

"Maxi" was everyone's favorite. Nathan Lopez was voted Best Actor of 2005.

Little Dakota won your hearts. Dakota Fanning won Best Actress of 2005.

Hot, hot, hot. Georgina Wilson and Borgy Manotoc were voted Best Models of 2005.

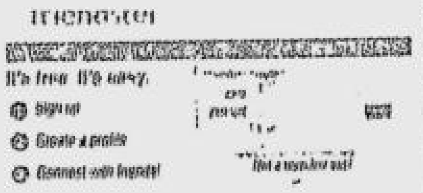
2bU! voters believed bands like MYMP needed to start writing their songs. "They should stop capitalizing on other people's work by releasing covers," one reader wrote. "Not original at all," another said.

So Jessica's gams weren't able to save it? "The Dukes of Hazzard" was voted Worst Movie of 2005.

You've had enough of Surf commercials. "Tama na, please," said one reader.

Teri Hatcher won the thumbs-down as Worst TV Actress of 2005. "*Puro pa*-cute," one reader said.

Pinoys must be really friendly. Your passion for Friendster hasn't waned. It was voted Best Website again.



RX fans are really tech-savvy. Monster Radio RX 93.1 copped Best Radio Station of the year again.

MONSTER RADIO
RX93.1

People really love waking up to the voices of RX's Chico and Delamar, who were picked as Best DJs of 2005.

Harry Potter
and the Half-Blood Prince

Oh yes, JK Rowling did it again. Not only did she win as Best Author of the year, her latest serving of magic and wizardry also won Best Book of 2005. No doubt about it, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" had you under its spell.

Readers loved the Tamaraws. The FEU Tamaraws were voted Best UAAP Team while Arwind Santos was voted Athlete of the Year.

Straight is out. It was the year to skip rebonding. You loved curls, curls, curls in 2005.

"Desperate Housewives," voted Best TV Show of the year, had you watching and talking. It's a double win for the cast and crew of Wisteria Lane, since Eva Longoria was also voted Best TV actress of 2005.

2bU! readers liked their mags compact and handy. Teen Vogue was voted Best Magazine of the Year.

Bench is still your mall must-stop. It was voted as Best Brand of 2005.

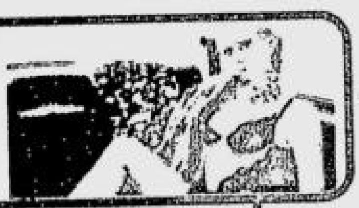
Now Playing

Everyone pods. The powerful iPod was the hands-down winner as Best Gadget of the year.

You guys were divided. While some of you loved the bands of the *pogi* rock tribe, others voted them as the worst.

Can't make up your minds? Hale's "The Day You Said Goodnight" was voted both Best and Worst Song of 2005.

You thought she was nice to look at but couldn't act Paris Hilton was voted Worst Actress of 2005.



Michael Gambon could do a better job as Dumbledore. He was voted Worst Actor of 2005.

Bye bye bohemian. After months of boho clones invading the city, the bohemian look finally got a big no from 2bU! readers.

No to cutting you up. Lipo copped the thumbs down for the nth year in a row.

Hello and goodbye

MAUI V. REYES

HALE

Hale's members have only been together for a year and a half, but they've achieved what some decade-old bands could only dream of. Their self-titled debut and carrier single, "The day you said goodnight," shot them to superstardom status. Lead vocalist Champ Lui Pio believes it's his band's sincere music that wins the masses.

Why did you choose to play this type of music?

It just comes naturally when we write songs. We meet halfway. The music is what we have in common. It's not like we deliberately wanted to make this kind of sound. It just happened.

What do you think of critics pegging you as "pogi rock"?

Hindi naman kami nagpapapogi eh! I don't know where that term started. People should just listen to the music and stop talking about looks.

What was the highlight of 2005 for you?

Fête de la Musique. That was the first big event where we felt we were big.

What can we expect from you in 2006?

A bigger album, which we're coming out with mid-next year.

From page C1

Rest in peace, brothers (and sister)

- Veteran recording engineer Jun Reyes died of leukemia last Jan. 27. Reyes worked for Audio Captain and Pink Noise studios. His resumé includes albums by the San Miguel Symphony Orchestra, Side A and Teeth.
- Universal Records head, Bella Tan, passed away last April 26.
- Wilfred Andrew Hernandez, aka Wolfmann, passed away last Aug. 21. He succumbed to an aneurysm that had him in a coma for two days. He was 28.
- Four concert-goers died at the Muziklaban concert early September.
- Bobby Wirth, drummer of the '70s rock group, Petrified Anthem, passed away last Sept. 30.

Moving on

- In February, Marc Abaya bade goodbye to <s>andwich to pursue his VJ career. Rabid fans can still catch him rocking out on stage with his other band, Kjwan.
- When the artist wants to go solo, the cradle will disband. Barbie Almabis announced in June that she was going solo, thus breaking up Barbie's Cradle. Now under the same management as Kitchie Nadal, Almabis often plays on the same bill as Nadal. Kakoi Legaspi, former guitarist of Barbie's Cradle, still has his amazing blues band, Mr. Crayon. Bassist Rommel and drummer Wendell have their respective session projects.
- While Chicosci has been laying low, guitarist Mong Alcaraz has kept himself busy, not just with his day job (as special events/consumer promo coordinator for a major company), but with other bands as well. Alcaraz has joined hip-hop group Sun Valley Crew and punk band Bitterpill.
- After a year of playing bass for the band Twisted Halo, Buddy Zabala has moved on to join The Dawn.
- The Mongols changed its name to Pupil. Because it could.

Buy not just my album, but also…

- **Soda.** Pepsi did it again, getting musicians to sell its sweet soda. Last year had Rico Blanco joining Beyoncé, among others, as Pepsi endorser. This year, his ex-bandmate Bamboo popped open his own Pepsi bottle (with a guitar, no less.)
- **Toothpaste.** Barbie tried to make us believe that using Close-Up will get guys and girls noticed when shopping at *tiangges*—provided we always flashed our pearly whites.
- **Shampoo.** Orange and Lemons did Sunsilk's "Touch Flicks" commercials.
- **Fast food.** McDonald's twister fries made a comeback with raspy songstress Kitchie Nadal, who also sported curly hair in the ads, apparently because twister fries are spiral and curly.
- **Cologne.** Nadal also lent her face to Ellips cologne.

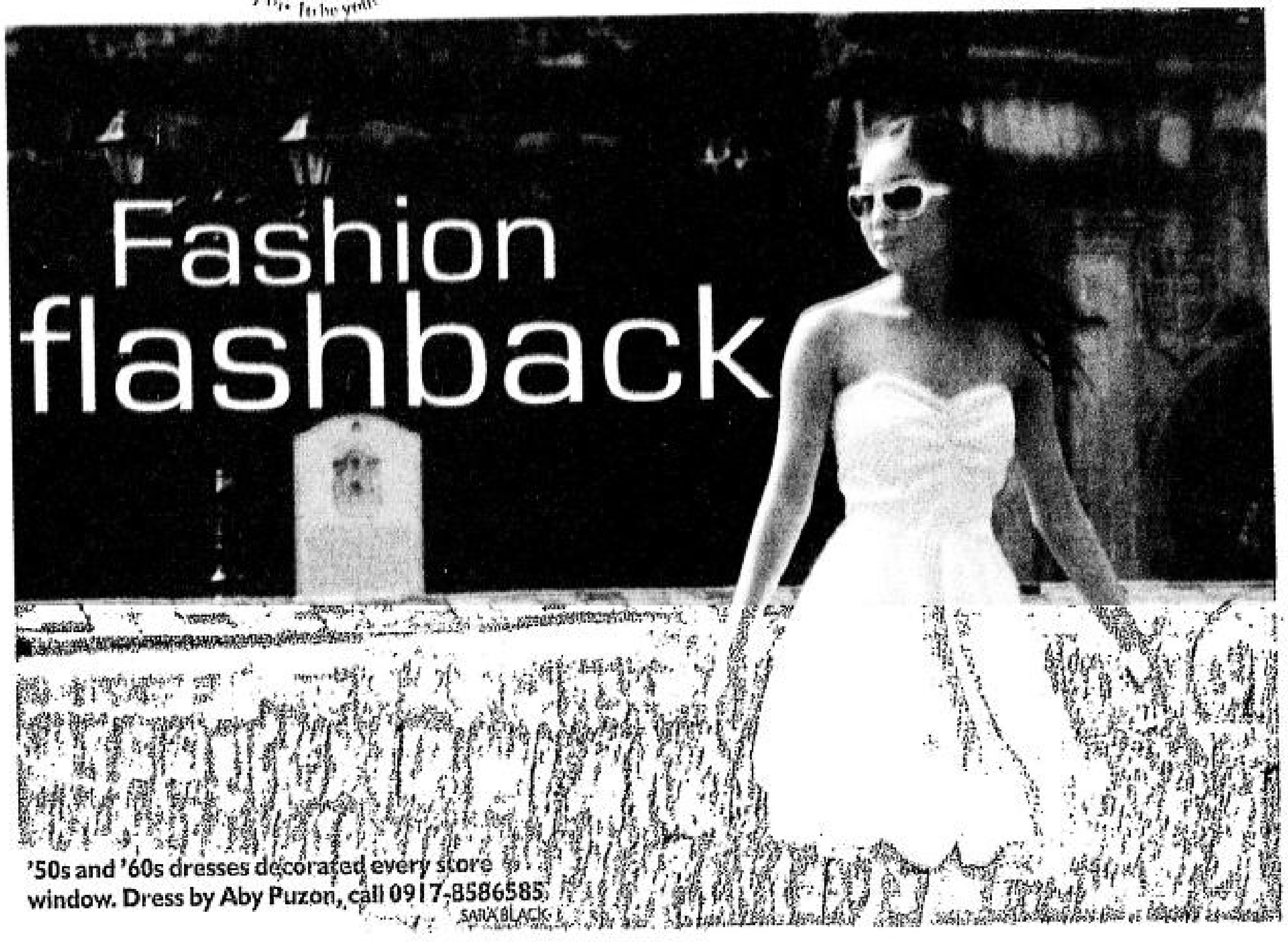
REST IN PEACE, music man. Wilfred Andrew Hernandez, aka Wolfmann, lived a full 28 years filled with music.

Sounds familiar?

- Orange and Lemons' song for Pinoy Big Brother, "Pinoy Ako," has exactly the same melody as foreign band The Care's "Chandelier."
- Get a copy of Superdrag's "Garbonzia," and have a listen to Session Road's "I'm leaving you".
- Silverchair fans believe that Cueshe's song, "Stay," is a rip-off of Silverchair's "The greatest view."

Win the best OPM albums of 2005

OPM has been doing so well this year that record companies have decided to play Santa and let you in on the cheer (nothing says ding-ding than high album sales!). So let's do a bunch of cartwheels with feeling for the awesomely super people at Warner Music Philippines, Universal Music, EMI Philippines and Sony-BMG, for giving us their best-selling OPM albums of 2005 to raffle off! Five readers will each get a Kitchie Nadal, Barbie, Nina, Orange and Lemons, Hale, Bamboo, Orange & Lemons, and The Eraserheads tribute album. Just tell us what for you was the music highlight of 2005. Send in your answers to music_2bu@yahoo.com on or before Jan. 2, 2006. Rock on!



Fashion flashback

From pastels and bright colors to dark, subdued shades, 2005 swung like a pendulum when it came to beauty and style

'50s and '60s dresses decorated every store window. Dress by Aby Puzon, call 0917-8586585. SARA BLACK

PURPLE was the color du jour in the last quarter of 2005. JAKE VERZOSA

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

ONCE AGAIN, 2005 PROVED to be another interesting year for fashion as various trends changed as quickly with each new season.

The start of the year brought pastels, full silhouettes and bright colors, but the "ber" months favored dark shades such as black, violet and gray along with more somber styles.

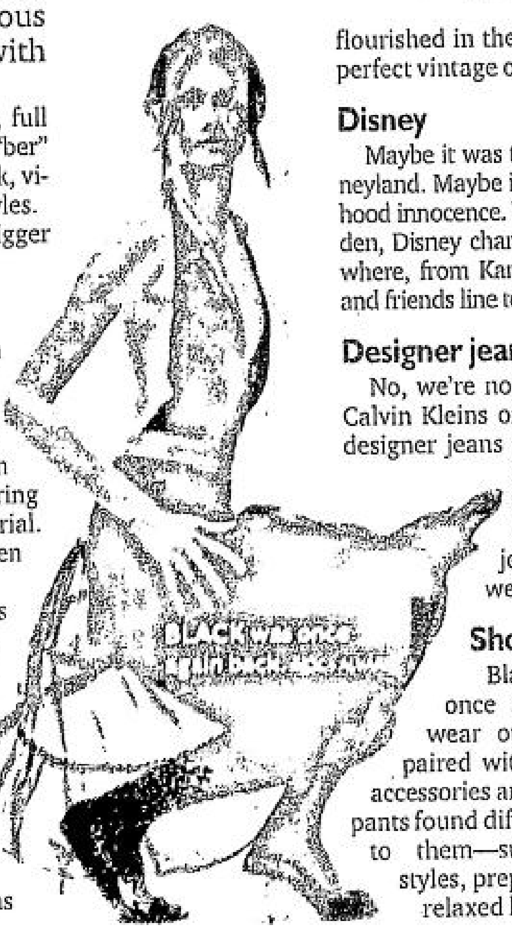
Here's a quick recap of some of the bigger trends of 2005:

Vintage

For the past few years, vintage fashion has been resurrected in all sorts of forms. It was the biggest influence in 2005's midsummer boho luxe trend. If off-shoulder peasant tops were big in 2002, then this year had everyone wearing layered skirts made of gauzy material. Again, these were cute at first, but when everyone started wearing them...

More vintage-themed items, such as shirts, bags, dresses and shoes, also made their appearance. Many of the items were influenced by the '50s and '60s eras—logo tees with '50s and '60s designs, in particular. Some shirts took their cues from old TV shows (like "Eat Bulaga," "Iskul Bukol," etc.)

Indie stores such as the I Love You, Marni's Room, and Store For All Seasons flourished in the wide-ranging search for the perfect vintage outfit.



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Disney

Maybe it was the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland. Maybe it was a general return to childhood innocence. Whatever it was, all of of a sudden, Disney characters were popping up everywhere, from Kamiseta's vintage Mickey Mouse and friends line to Giordano's casual shirts.

Designer jeans

No, we're not talking about the overrated Calvin Kleins of the '90s. The year's crop of designer jeans was led by Viktor Jeans, the fave of many a fashion fanatic. With cropped pants and interesting embellishments, jeans were never more fun to wear than this year.

Shorts

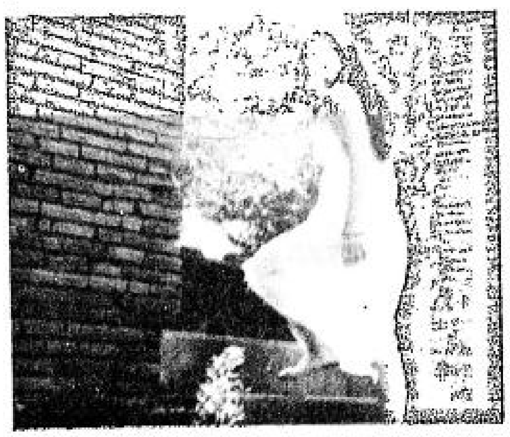
Blame Jenni Epperson. Shorts once again became acceptable to wear outside the house, and were paired with dressy tops, a whole lot of accessories and heels. People who hated hot pants found different styles of shorts available to them—surfer-inspired knee grazing styles, preppy Bermuda shorts, as well as relaxed loose shorts.

Boleros

Cropped jackets in all sorts of designs were among 2005's hits. Lace boleros or rugged cropped cotton jackets? As long as it was cropped, it was hot.

Skirts and dresses

Masculine clothes didn't stand a chance. Skirts, aside from the aforementioned layered ones of the Bohemian kind, were sold in stores everywhere. Frilly skirts, printed skirts, bubble skirts—they made being a girl look so good. '50s- and '60s-inspired dresses also made a comeback sometime in the middle of the year.



THE BOHEMIAN look was the most successful trend of the year. SARA BLACK

Embellished shoes

Beaded, spangled, ribboned shoes—thanks to China, the market was suddenly filled with these embellished wonders at a lower cost. Some shoe brands such as Hot Wind also made a splash with their comfortable, stylish creations.

Edwardian

Although this trend didn't make as much of a splash as bohemian did, magazine covers were filled with ladies in high necklines, ruffles, big hair, and accessories in the last quarter of 2005.

GOODBYE, rebonding. Soft curls made it big. OCS ALVAREZ

Brands

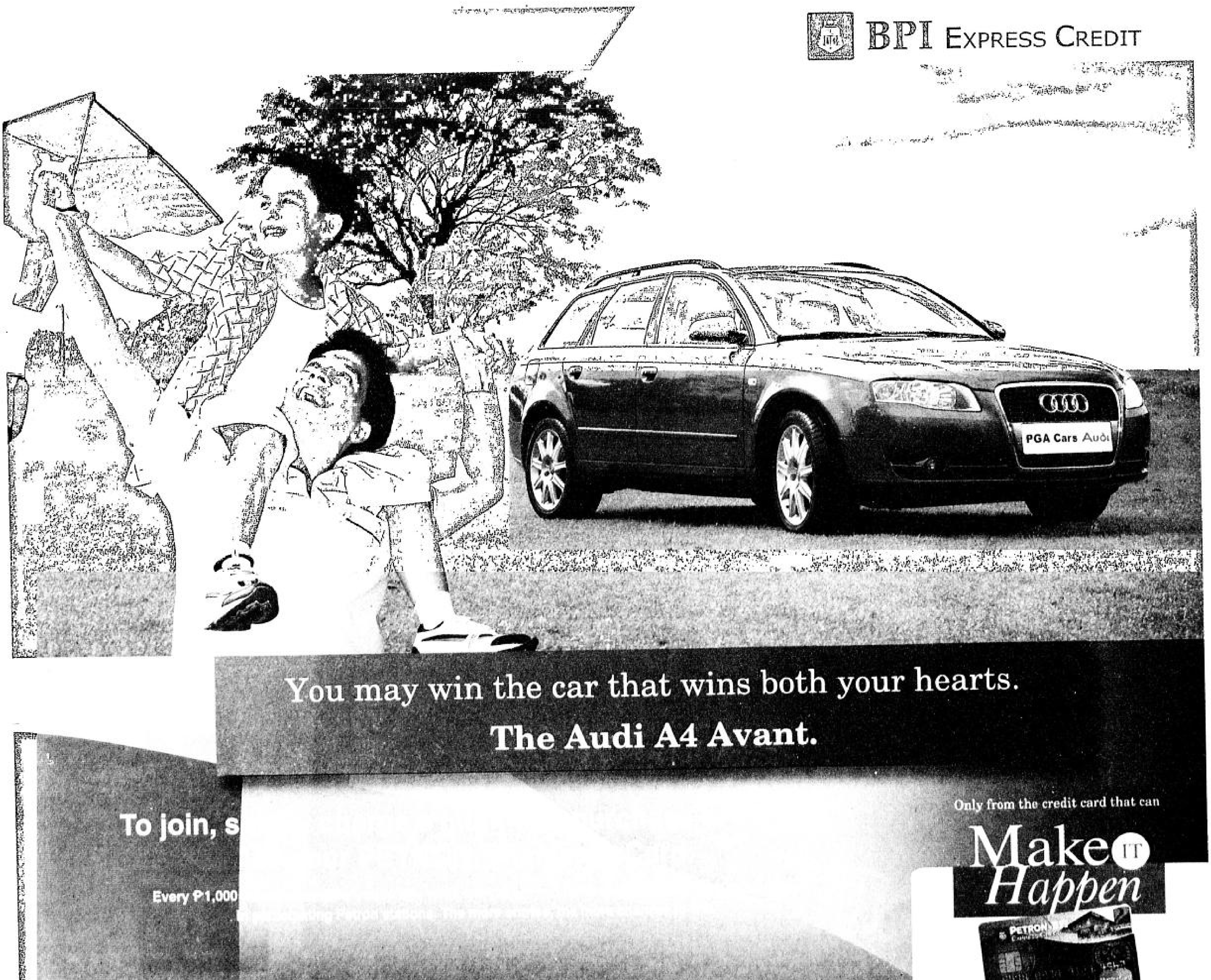
A number of new brands recently made their presence felt in the local retail scene. Zara topped the list of notables with hot sales every week. Also new in the scene is department store Debenhams, which carries everything from underwear to accessories.

Local fashion brands decided to give themselves a makeover. with new image models. Freeway got hold of MTV VJ Cindy Kurleto, while Karimadon had Amanda Griffin posing for their billboards.

Beauty

This year's beauty looks were heavily influenced by the fashion trends. While the first half of the year brought pastel-fresh makeup and loose hair, the second half went for a more glamorous, dark look (dark colors such as black and purple on the eyes, more subdued color on the rest of the face). The focus remained on the eyes, ranging from a light wash of color on the lids to sultry, smoky looks.

However, one thing was consistent: curly hair. Less people went to the parlor to have their hair rebonded, preferring the more natural-looking digital perm.



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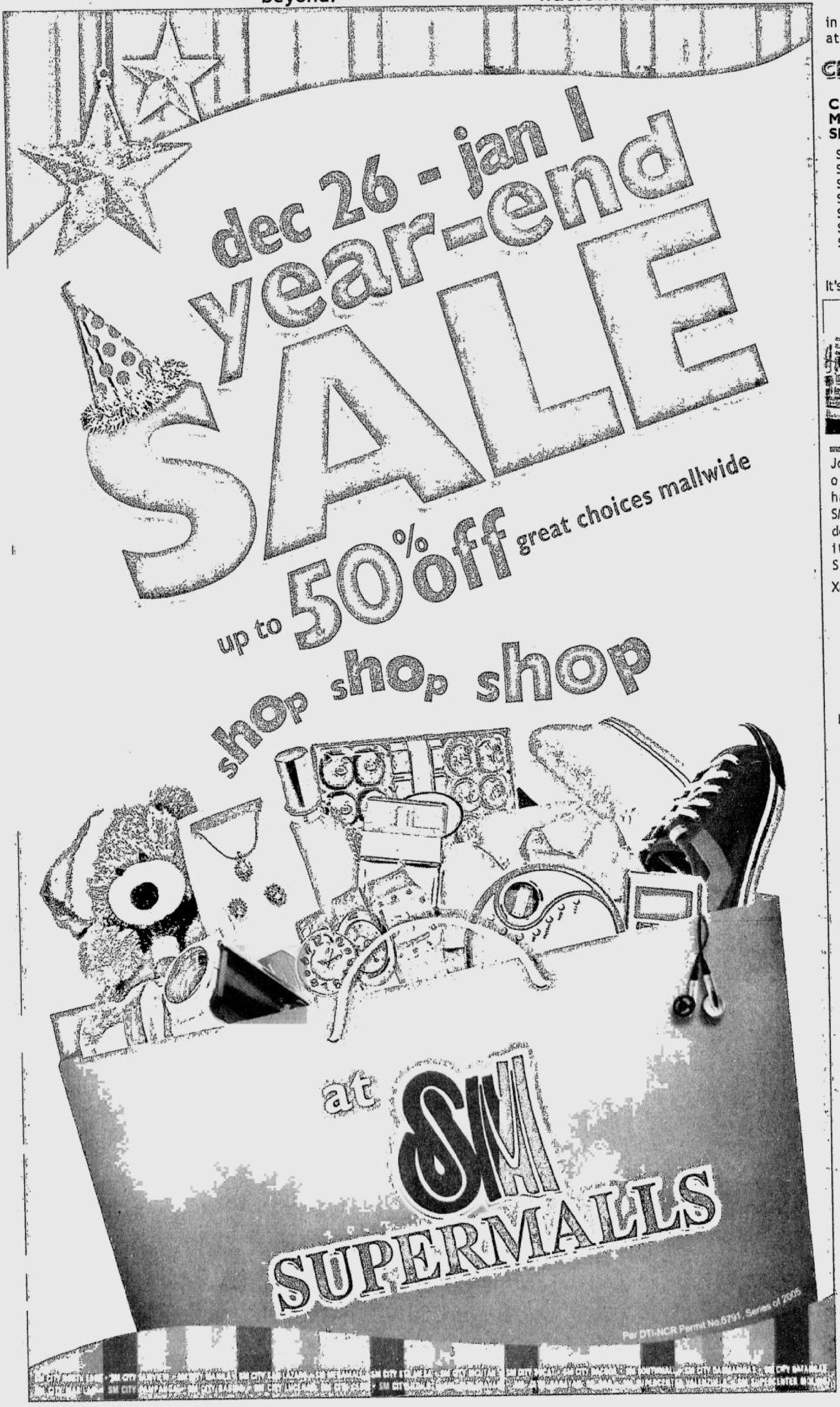
Dec. 29	—	10am-12 MIDNIGHT *(Metro Manila Malls Only)*
Dec. 30	—	10am-10pm
Dec. 31	—	9am - 7pm
Jan. 01, 2006	—	12nn-10pm

Thousands of holiday shoppers are flocking to the nearest SM Supermall or SM Supercenter in search of great finds for the New Year and beyond. The Year-End Sale event, with its attractive half-price-off on a wide selection of products and services, is being held simultaneously at 22 SM Supermalls nationwide.



Per DTI-NCR Permit No.6791, Series of 2005

Here are some of the Sale highlights you can experience:

Spectacular Fireworks!

Dec. 29

SM Megamall, SM City Marilao

December 30

SM City Fairview
SM Supercenter Valenzuela
SM City Bicutan
SM City Sucat
SM City Batangas
SM Supercenter Molino
SM City Sta. Mesa
SM City San Lazaro
SM Southmall
SM City Bacoor
SM City Pampanga
SM City Lucena

December 31

SM City North Edsa, SM City Cebu
SM City Iloilo

Bring the whole family to watch this year's entries in the Metro Manila Film Festival at SM Cinemas.

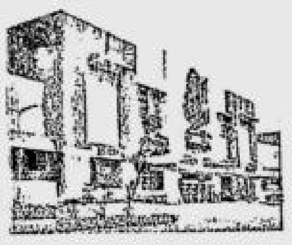
Christmas with the Stars

Catch the stars of the 2005 Metro Manila Film Festival at SM Supermalls!

SM City Fairview	Dec. 28, 5pm
SM City Manila	Dec. 29, 2pm
SM City San Lazaro	Dec. 30, 2pm
SM City Sta. Mesa	Dec. 30, 5pm
SM City Sucat	Dec. 30, 4pm
SM Southmall	Dec. 30, 5pm
SM Southmall	Jan.3, 2006, 2pm

It's shop-all-you-can at SM City Lucena:

Shoppers can get discounts galore on countless products and services. New tenants include: ANGELICUM•BY G SALON•COLLEZIONE •FOR ME•K-SERVICO •TRONIX IMAGING.



Join the flurry of Year-End happenings at SM City Cagayan de Oro to cap its Year-End Sale:

Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan Table Tennis National Open
Dec 28 - 30 - Mall Atrium

Dec 31 • 4pm
• Party with Cueshe (Mall Atrium)

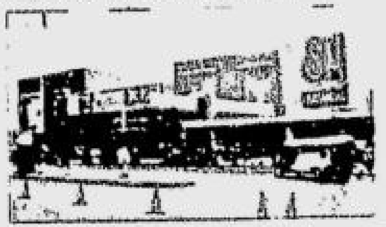
Dec 31 • 7pm
• Aerial Symphony & New Year's Eve Fireworks Display

Terrific treats await Bulakeños at SM City Marilao during its grand Year-End Sale offerings.

Shoppers are expected to avail of big bargains, delicious dining options and endless entertainment.

With the newly-opened SM Storyland, parents and children alike can enjoy the FUNtastic rides everyday!

Funfare and ethnic flair await SM City Batangas shoppers and patrons.

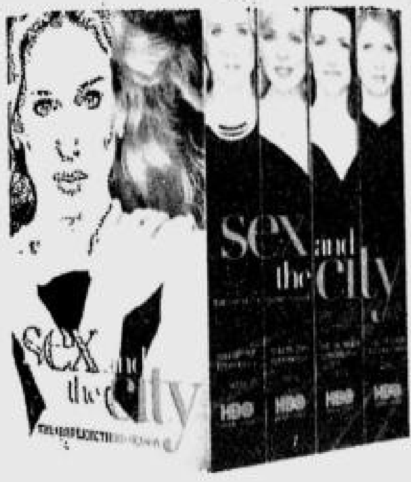


Upon their arrival at the mall, customers will be welcomed in style by colorful Ati-Atihan performers daily.

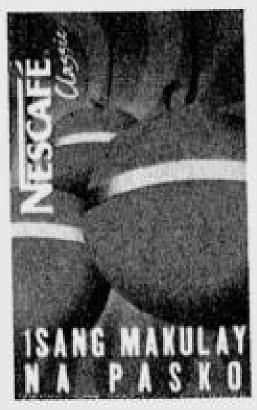
Come & shop at SM City Baguio as Manila Philharmonic Orchestra serenades all shoppers wih their renditions of famous ballads & love songs on December 30.

2bU! LIFESTYLE
For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback:
Inquirer life name/age/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Hail the headliners!



Bring out the champagne and confetti! It's time to toast this year's most impressive noisemakers



By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Corresponent

THE SO-called idiot box had big surprises for its loyal viewers this year.

"Sex and the City" passed its torch to "Desperate Housewives," the second season of which got some harsh criticism. Despite this, it turned a lot of couch potatoes into addicted fans the moment it premiered. Lots of Filipino fans are forever thankful to Studio 23 for bringing it to our shores.

Shows like "Lost," "24," "CSI," "The Apprentice" and Tyra Banks' "America's Next Top Model" also made a lot of people stay at home and glued on their sets.

A lot of big-budget and special-effects films also produced long lines in 2005. Blockbuster films for the year include "Sin City," "Batman Begins," "War of the Worlds," "Fantastic Four," "Kingdom of Heaven," "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and "King Kong."

Hollywood merry-go-round

2005 was also a year of break-ups in Hollywood.

After dating for 112 days, Renee Zellwegger and Kenny Chesney rushed to the altar. The marriage lasted for only four months, the actress eventually seeking an annulment based on "fraud."

Nicole Richie not only parted ways with best friend Paris Hilton, but her engagement with Adam Goldstein was also called off.

"Simple Life" star Paris Hilton's wedding to shipping heir Paris Latsis was scrapped. She was seen smooching Stavros Niarchos III a day after the breakup.

"Newlyweds" stars Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey are now separated after Jessica surprised her hubby by filing for divorce.

Other couples that broke up include Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds and his wife; Tori Spelling and husband; Mischa Barton and Brandon Davis; Denise Richards and Charlie Sheen; Katie Holmes and Chris Klein; and of course, Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston.

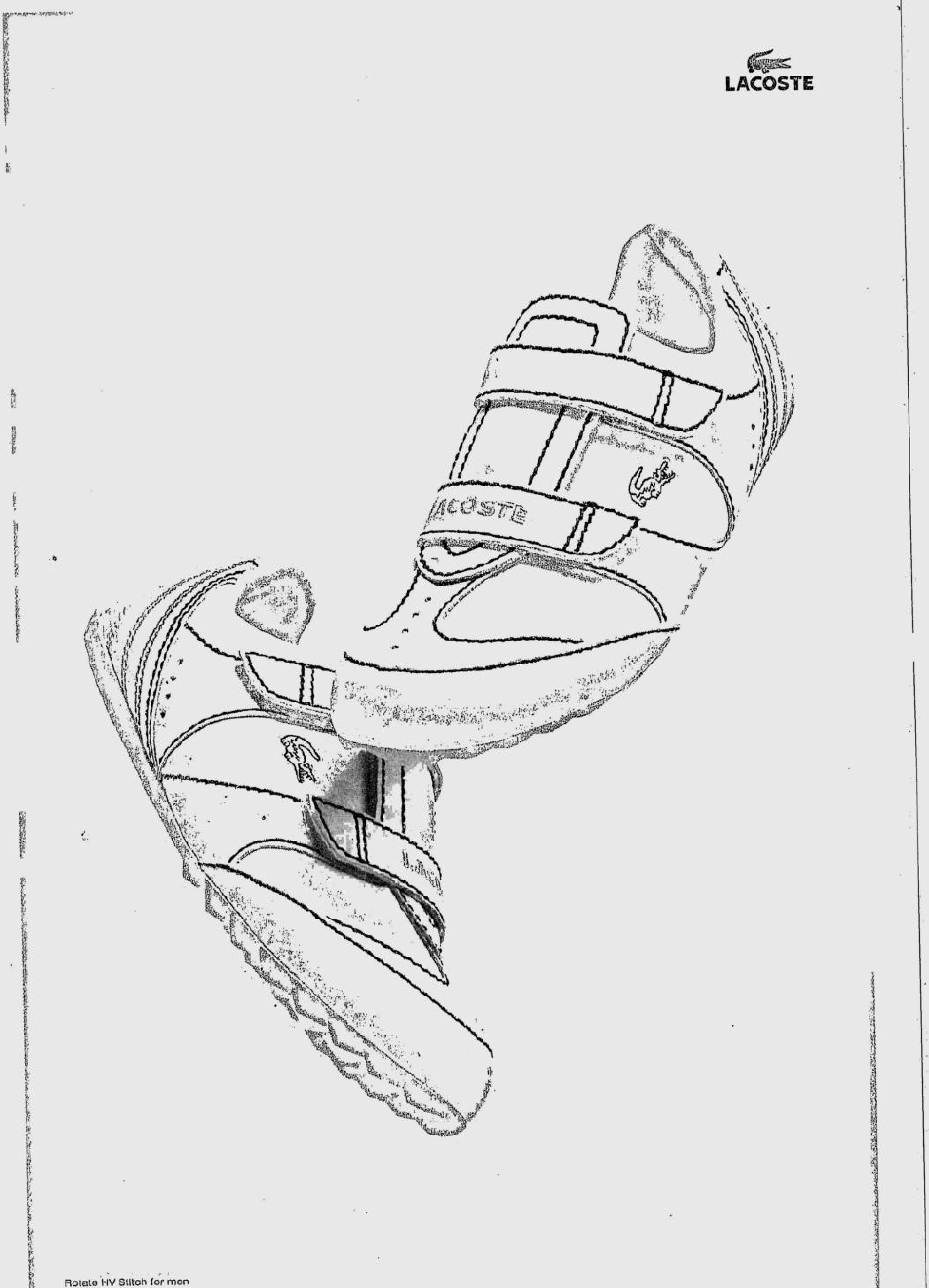
But not everybody broke up. A lot of celebs got together as well.

When Brad said bye to Jen, he said hi to Angelina Jolie and his now adopted children Maddox and Zahara.

Britney Spears and Kevin Federline went down the aisle and became proud parents to Sean Preston. Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher also exchanged wedding vows. Meanwhile, Donald Trump and

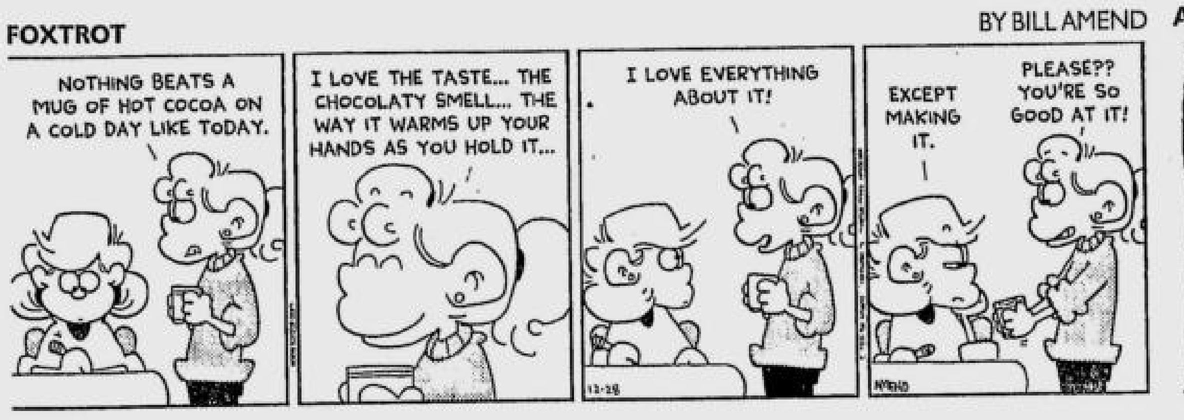
HAIL/ D3

Regalong Handog
NEW YEAR promo!!!
Get FREE samples of
GENIAL DEW
GUAVA & AMPALAYA HERBAL TEA
(to prevent diabetes and hypertension)
FOR EVERY CAN OF
Kankunis®
Herbal Slimming Tea
Bundling Promo
Available at mercury drug
and other supermarkets and drugstores.
• Senna •
• Shiu Sen Tea •
• Malvae •
Kankunis


LACOSTE
Rotate HV Stitch for men
www.lacoste.com
• Shangri-la Plaza Mall, Tel. No. 635-0744 • Glorietta 3, Tel. No. 867-4077 • Robinsons Place Manila, Tel. No. 522-7778
• The Power Plant Mall, Tel. No. 898-0933 • The Podium, Tel. No. 633-8226 • The Gateway Mall, Tel. No. 912-5726 • Robinsons Galleria, Tel. 638-8020
• SM City Davao, Tel. No. (082) 297-2510 • Ayala Center Cebu, Tel. (032) 232-5455

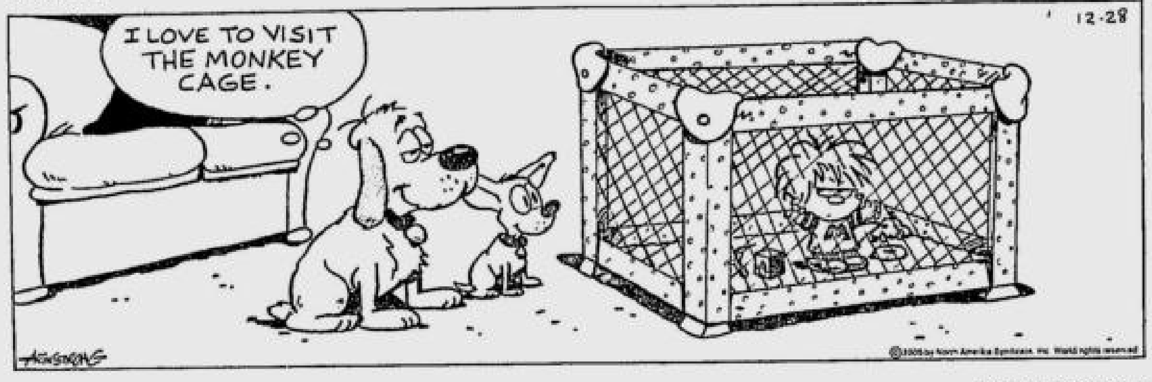
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


NOTHING BEATS A MUG OF HOT COCOA ON A COLD DAY LIKE TODAY.
I LOVE THE TASTE... THE CHOCOLATY SMELL... THE WAY IT WARMS UP YOUR HANDS AS YOU HOLD IT...
I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT IT!
12-28
EXCEPT MAKING IT.
PLEASE?? YOU'RE SO GOOD AT IT!
AMEND

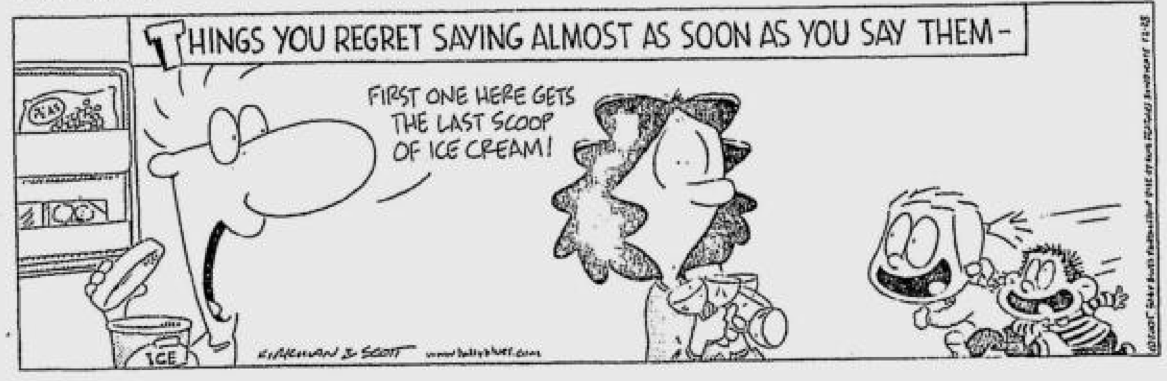
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I LOVE TO VISIT THE MONKEY CAGE.
12-28
ARMSTRONG

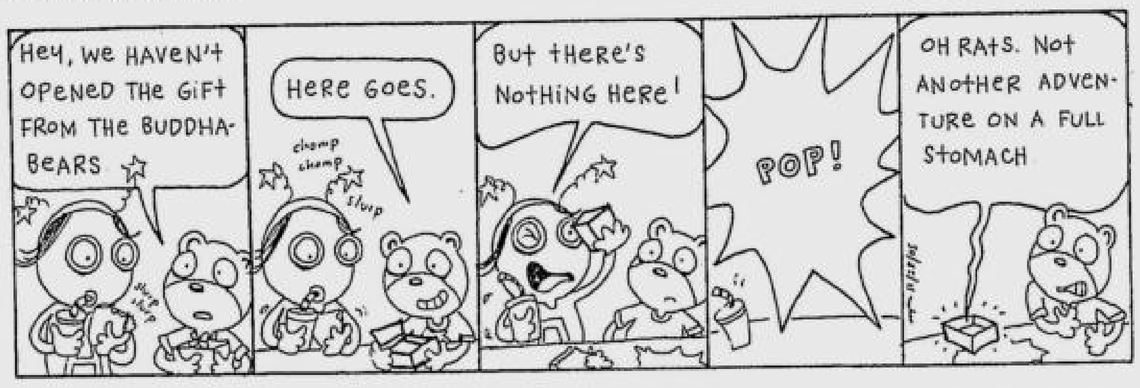
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


THINGS YOU REGRET SAYING ALMOST AS SOON AS YOU SAY THEM-
FIRST ONE HERE GETS THE LAST SCOOP OF ICE CREAM!
ICE
KIRKMAN & SCOTT
www.babyblues.com

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, WE HAVEN'T OPENED THE GIFT FROM THE BUDDHA-BEARS
Here Goes.
chomp
chomp
slurp
But there's Nothing Here!
POP!
OH RATS. Not Another ADVENTURE ON A FULL STOMACH

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're confident and self-assured. You have a certain kind of sophistication no matter what you do. This is because you are genuine and down-to-earth. People respect this. You need recognition for what you do. You might come to a turn in the road in this next year. Something requires an important decision.
Birthdate of: Denzel Washington, actor; Maggie Smith, actress; Nichelle Nichols, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Bosses, VIPs, parents and influential people suddenly offer you help today. How refreshing! This is the out you've been waiting for. At least it's the out that will work right now.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Sudden opportunities to travel or get more education might come to you now. Act on this if you can. You'll have to be swift because this window of opportunity is brief.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Gifts, goodies, favors and perks suddenly come to you today. This is unexpected, out of the blue and welcome! Accept whatever generosity is extended to you.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your closest relationships get a lovely boost of enthusiasm today. You might meet someone from a different background. Perhaps you hear from a loved one who is far away.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Surprise news at work catches you off-guard. It could bring new technology to the scene. It might be the addition of an unusual person on staff.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Love at first sight is possible today. New romance can bloom! No matter what your situation, you want thrills, adventure and fun today! This is also an excellent day for the arts.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Expect the unexpected at home today or within your family dynamic. Surprise company might drop in. New technology might excite you at home now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a good day to gamble or take a long shot. Your creative vibes are hot! Make vacation plans. Enjoy playful activities with children. (Romance looks sweet.)

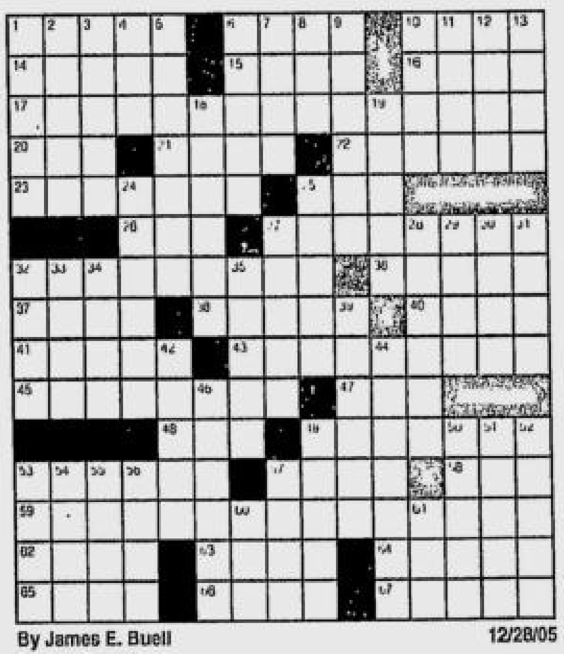
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): New moneymaking ways come to mind today. (You're always thinking about get-rich-quick schemes.) But this one just might do the trick! It's exciting, different and high tech.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You feel excited about life today. There's an electric quality in the air. You'll meet unusual, bizarre people today. Perhaps somebody surprises you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is the kind of day you love. The Sun makes a lovely transit to your ruler, Uranus, which is a strong energizing quality for you. You're full of bright ideas, fresh energy and hope for tomorrow.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Friends surprise you today. Possibly, you'll meet a real character—someone bizarre or from a different culture. You're definitely interested in others today. Don't stay at home.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL

12/28/05

ACROSS
1 Book after Jonah
6 Loud report
10 Part of U.A.E.
14 Low-budget prefix
15 "Typee" sequel
16 Pinto rival of the '70s
17 Decelerates
20 Papua New Guinea port
21 Caesar's last date
22 Dairy Queen offering
23 Surpasses
25 Tail greeting
26 Erving of hoops
27 1932 Greta Garbo film
32 With 43A, slows
36 Parts
37 __-Ude, Russia
38 Lincoln's assassin
40 South African language
41 Two to one, for one
43 See 32A
45 Sun spots?
47 Veneration
48 Visibly embarrassed
49 Surface
53 McHale's TV craft
57 Object of ridicule
58 Simile center
59 Brakes
62 Pincushion alternative
63 Fills the space
64 Who, we?
65 Threadbare
66 Exonerate
67 Popular '60s Jaguar

DOWN
1 Singer Haggard
2 Mountain climber's aid
3 Trig. function
4 Industrious insect
5 Haberdasher cousins
6 Dog treats, often
7 "Famous" cookie name
8 Nice turndown
9 Lunges toward
10 Ding-dong, __ calling!
11 Peruse
12 Indian tourist stop
13 Point of departure
18 "Hat-chet" man of a Bond film
19 Joe-to-go packet
24 Utopian
25 Squander
27 Persian words?
28 Brewed drink
29 Jai __
30 Paper quantity
31 Land in the sea
32 Gang territory
33 Banned spray
34 "Kiss Me __"
35 Sniffed out.
39 Fine fettle
42 Gumbo pods
44 Car color combo
46 Pardoned
49 Too particular
50 Mm-mm good!
51 Drain, as resources
52 No longer in
53 That was close!
54 Oz canine
55 Film over
56 Valhalla host
57 Old videotape format
60 Soccer zero
61 Baloney!

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	P	E	E	■	O	N	T	A	P	■	M	O	J	O
A	R	C	S	■	N	E	A	L	E	■	A	B	U	T
R	O	O	T	C	E	L	L	A	R	■	N	I	S	I
G	A	N	D	H	I	■	L	E	F	T	I	S	T	S
E	M	O	■	A	D	A	■	■	O	R	A	■	■	■
■	■	■	B	R	A	N	C	H	R	I	C	K	E	Y
B	N	A	I	■	S	C	H	E	M	E	■	A	X	E
M	Y	R	N	A	■	H	A	T	■	D	Y	L	A	N
W	E	T	■	C	L	O	N	E	S	■	A	B	M	S
S	T	E	A	M	E	R	T	R	U	N	K	■	■	■
■	■	■	R	E	X	■	■	O	R	O	■	S	O	D
A	M	N	E	S	I	A	L	■	G	O	E	T	H	E
L	O	T	T	■	C	L	O	V	E	R	L	E	A	F
G	I	S	H	■	O	I	L	E	R	■	A	E	R	O
A	L	B	A	■	N	I	T	T	Y	■	T	R	E	E

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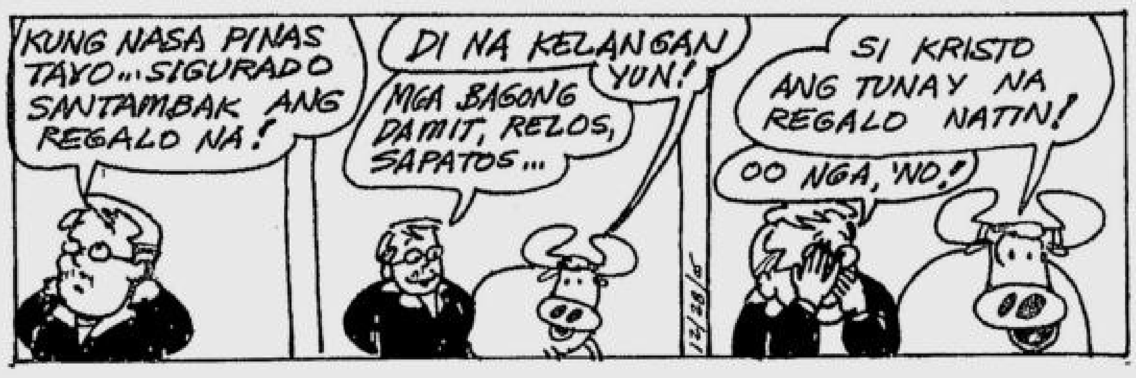
12/28/05

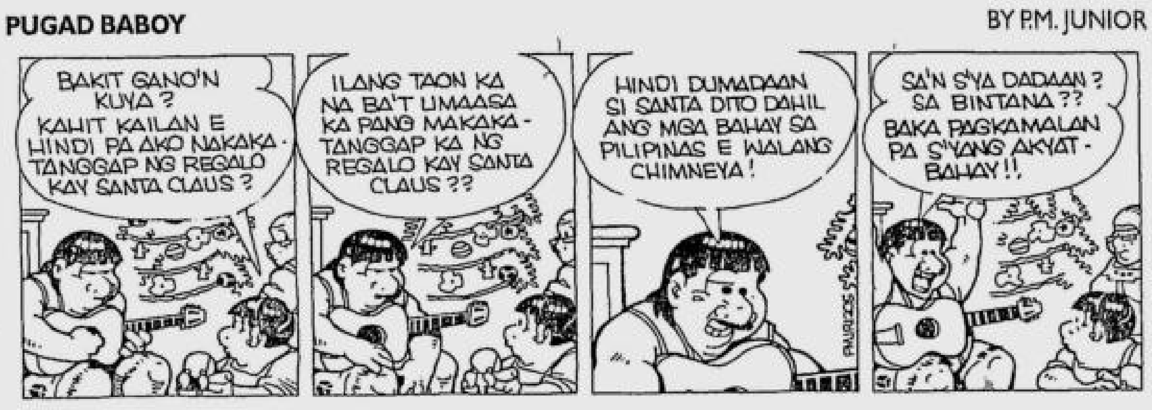
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


KUNG NASA PINAS TAYO...SIGURADO SANTAMBAK ANG REGALO NA!
DI NA KELANGAN YUN!
MGA BAGONG DAMIT, RELOS, SAPATOS...
12/28/05
SI KRISTO ANG TUNAY NA REGALO NATIN!
OO NGA, 'NO!

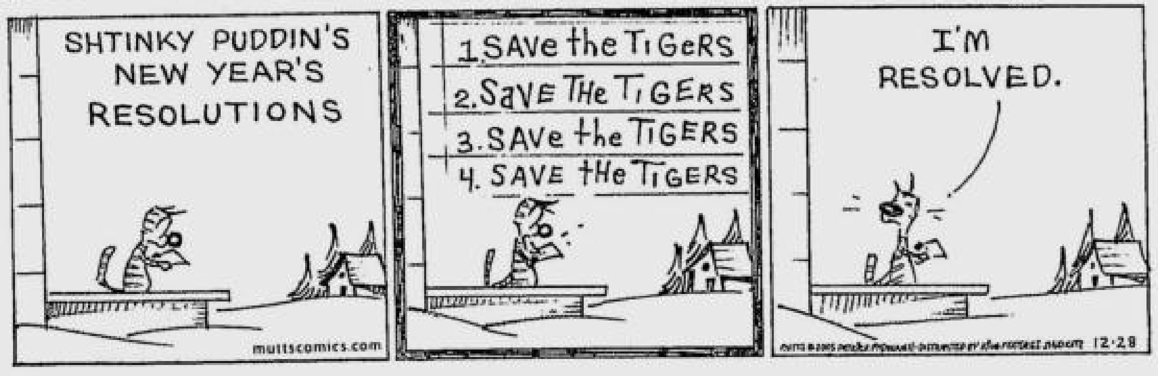
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


BAKIT GANO'N KUYA? KAHIT KAILAN E HINDI PA AKO NAKAKA-TANGGAP NG REGALO KAY SANTA CLAUS?
ILANG TAON KA NA BA'T UMAASA KA PANG MAKAKA-TANGGAP KA NG REGALO KAY SANTA CLAUS??
HINDI DUMADAAN SI SANTA DITO DAHIL ANG MGA BAHAY SA PILIPINAS E WALANG CHIMNEYA!
SA'N S'YA DADAAN? SA BINTANA?? BAKA PAGKAMALAN PA S'YANG AKYAT-BAHAY!!

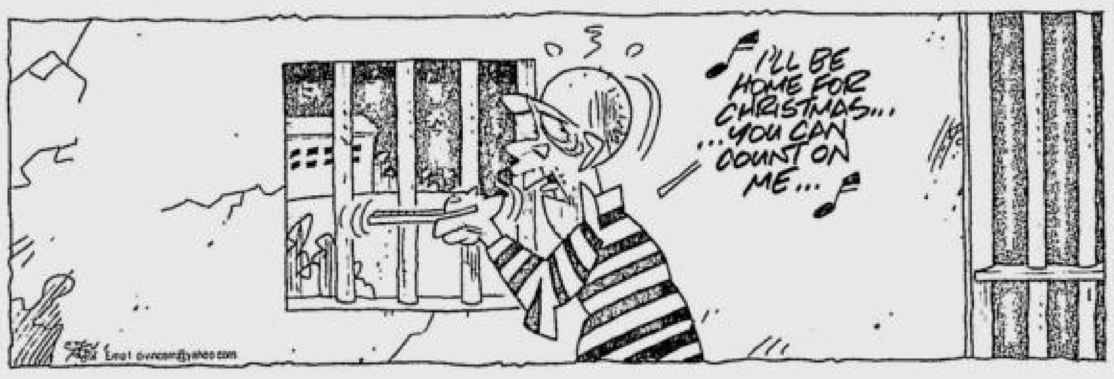
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHTINKY PUDDIN'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
muttscomics.com
1. SAVE the TIGERS
2. SAVE THE TIGERS
3. SAVE the TIGERS
4. SAVE the TIGERS
I'M RESOLVED.
12-28

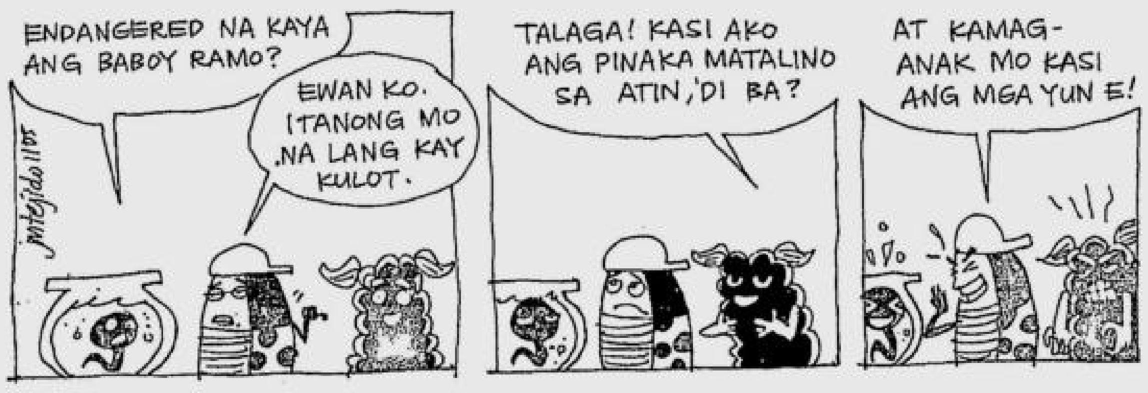
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS... YOU CAN COUNT ON ME...

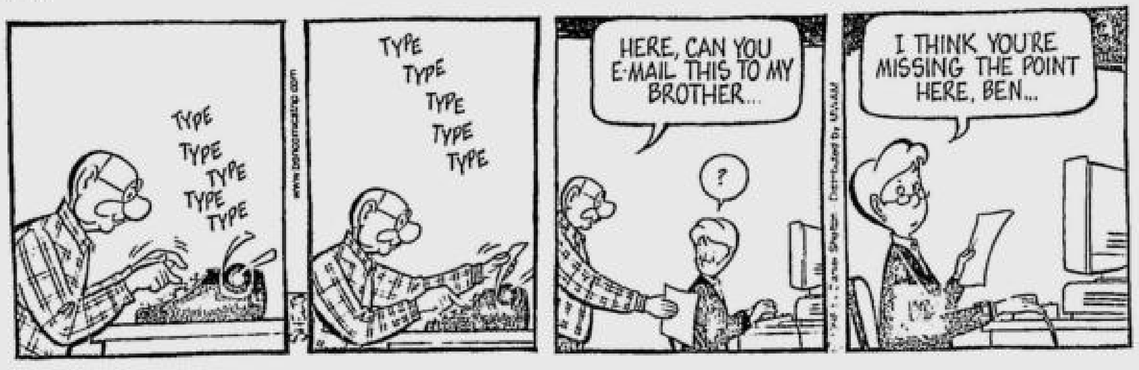
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ENDANGERED NA KAYA ANG BABOY RAMO?
EWAN KO. ITANONG MO NA LANG KAY KULOT.
TALAGA! KASI AKO ANG PINAKA MATALINO SA ATIN, 'DI BA?
AT KAMAG-ANAK MO KASI ANG MGA YUN E!

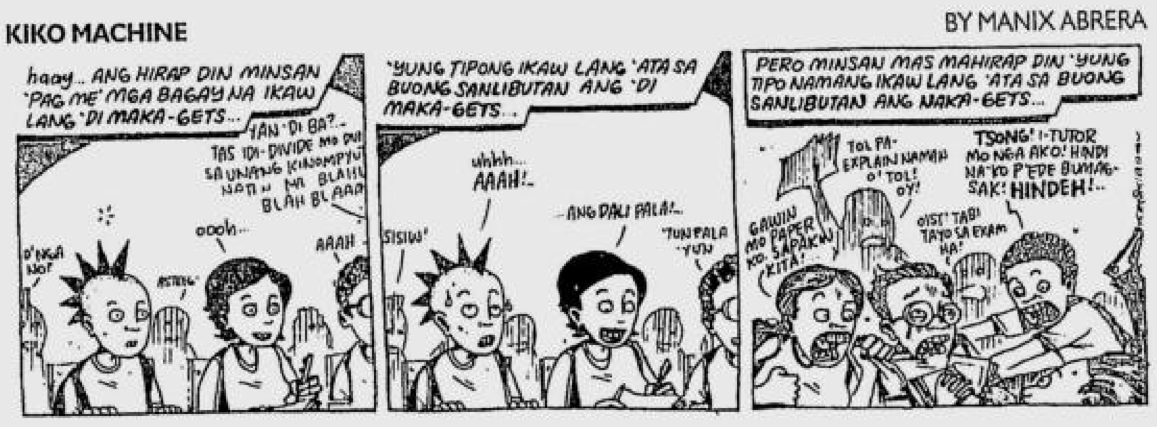
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


TYPE TYPE TYPE TYPE TYPE
TYPE TYPE TYPE TYPE TYPE
HERE, CAN YOU E-MAIL THIS TO MY BROTHER...
?
I THINK YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT HERE, BEN...

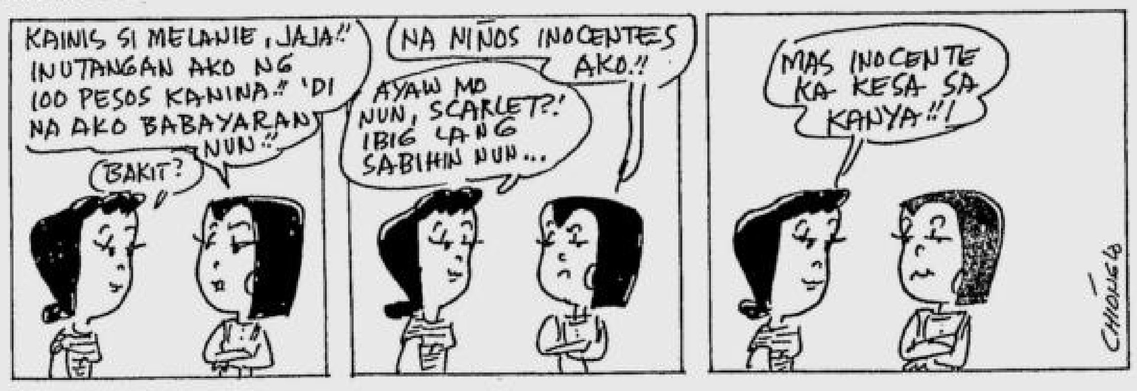
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


haay... ANG HIRAP DIN MINSAN 'PAG ME' MGA BAGAY NA IKAW LANG 'DI MAKA-GETS...
YAN 'DI BA?.. TAS IDI-DIVIDE MO DUN SA UNANG KINOMPYUT NATIN NA BLAH BLAH BLAAA
oooh...
AAAH
'YUNG TIPONG IKAW LANG 'ATA SA BUONG SANLIBUTAN ANG 'DI MAKA-GETS...
uhhh... AAAH!..
ANG DALI PALA!..
'YUN PALA 'YUN
PERO MINSAN MAS MAHIRAP DIN 'YUNG TIPO NAMANG IKAW LANG 'ATA SA BUONG SANLIBUTAN ANG NAKA-GETS...
TOL PA-EXPLAIN NAMAN O' TOL! OY!
TSONG! I-TUTOR MO NGA AKO! HINDI NA 'KO P'EDE BUMAGSAK! HINDEH!..
GAWIN MO PAPER KO. SAPAKIN KITA!
OIST! TABI TAYO SA EXAM HA!

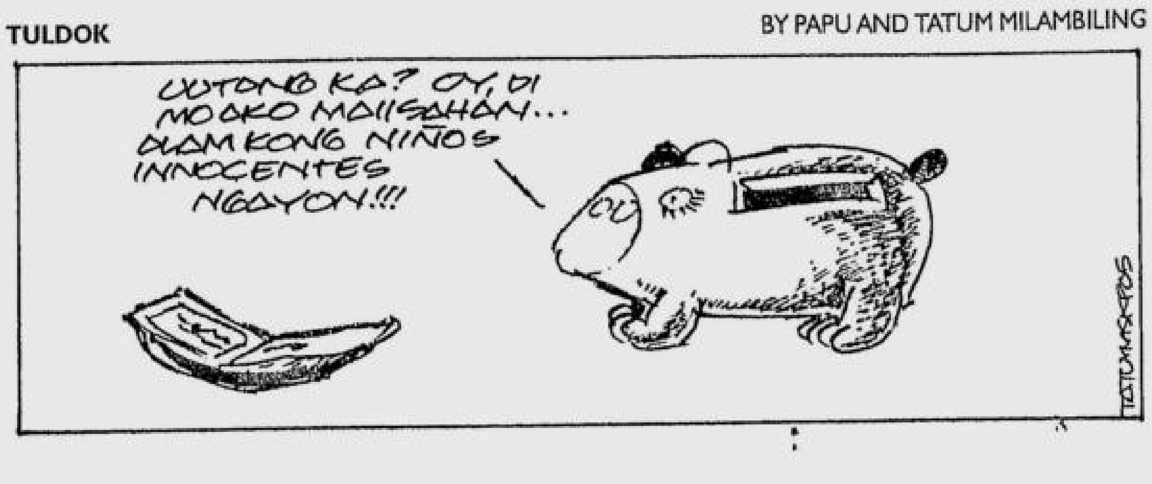
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

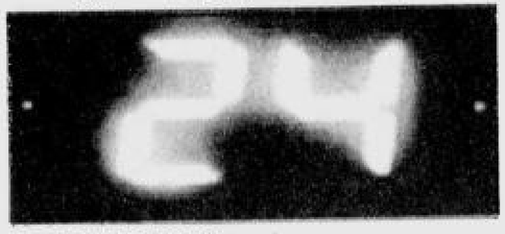

KAINIS SI MELANIE, JAJA!! INUTANGAN AKO NG 100 PESOS KANINA!! 'DI NA AKO BABAYARAN NUN!!
BAKIT?
NA NIÑOS INOCENTES AKO!!
AYAW MO NUN, SCARLET?! IBIG LANG SABIHIN NUN...
MAS INOCENTE KA KESA SA KANYA!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


UUTONG KA? OY, DI MO AKO MAIISAHAN... ALAM KONG NIÑOS INNOCENTES NGAYON!!!

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES



BOOB-TUBE biggies

Hail . . .

From page D1

Melania Knauss burned a lot of money when they got married.

And then, there are Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes, who have also announced wedding plans. They shocked the whole world this year with their unexpected love affair, which many believed to be a mere publicity stunt. But they are now expecting a kid!

Other stars who made headlines were "Alfie" co-stars Jude Law and Sienna Miller. Jude cheated on her with his children's nanny, then apologized in print for it. Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, on the other hand, continued to make millions off their merchandising empire.

Farewells

WE MISS you, Pope John Paul II.

Among the major figures who passed away in 2005 were Pat Morita, best known for his role in "The Karate Kid," civil rights icon Rosa Parks, musician Luther Vandross, Nobel Prize-winning author Saul Bellow, talk-show host Johnny Carson, acclaimed actress Anne Bancroft, playwright Arthur Miller and the much-loved Pope John Paul II.

Most-searched names

Surveys and polls may be good indicators of the most wanted and most popular in 2005, but Yahoo! Search also has its own credible lists, at least as far as Yahoo! searchers are concerned.

BRITNEY had a baby.

Britney Spears remained the most popular search object, as she had been these past years. Mariah Carey made a strong comeback thanks to her new album "The Emancipation of Mimi." Other most-searched female celebs included Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and Jessica Simpson.

Rapper 50 Cent was runner-up to Britney in music artist searches. His song "Candy Shop" topped the most-searched song list, too. Also receiving a lot of clicks were the movie "Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith" and the television programs "American Idol," "Lost" and "Desperate Housewives."

A lot of Yahoo! searchers were also very much interested in Hurricane Katrina, the Asian tsunami, Apple's iPod, the xBox 360 and PSP—which gave you an idea what 2005's biggest stories were all about.

Faces

From page D4

na," "Sugo" and the humongous "Encantadia," and of course, the promising "Panday" and the phenomenal "Pinoy Big Brother" from ABS-CBN, which has produced instant celebs like Sam Milby, the latest Bench endorser.

The Philippine movie industry was pretty blah, as usual. But at least independent and/or digital films led by "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros"—the Cinemalaya Jury Prize winner and the first Pinoy film invited to compete in Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival—sparked some hope for the industry.

THOM Filicia came to Manila.

It's a techie, techie world

Hands down, Google is 2005's newsmaker of the year

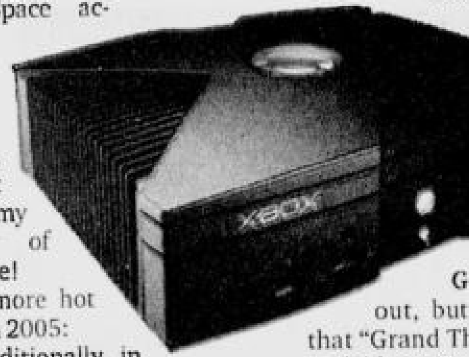
By Gabriel H. Mercado
Contributor

GOOGLE—THE CENTER OF THE universe as we know it—lists social networking sites MySpace and Google's own Orkut among the "Top Gainers of 2005." This is notable, since they were the only two of their kind in a list that counted such diverse titles as the "World of Warcraft" game, the British band "Green Day" and "Leonardo da Vinci."

Microsoft's Xbox 360 is the only gadget in the "Top Ten Searches of 2005" category, primarily populated by the likes of Harry Potter, Angelina Jolie and Janet Jackson (#1).

Google's lists are an indication that a typical person's concept of fun these days is checking out his or her favorite celebrities' exploits, critiquing friends via online profiles, and reaching out for a game console.

I'm not too sure about that, but I'll give it some thought after I've read my bradandangelina.net newsletter, and then wrap up a nice testimonial on my friend's MySpace account (goodness, she's gained weight!). Hold on, Amazon's just delivered my PS2 Goblet of Fire! Whoopee!



Here are more hot tech stories in 2005:

Blogs. Traditionally, in any news event, there are three parties involved: the source of the news, the news delivery service, and the readers.

What if there was a way to remove the middleman, and forward news and information faster and more accurately along the line? Enter weblogs or blogs.

2005 is the year the general populace realized that becoming a blogger is akin to becoming one's own publisher. I know what you're thinking. Surely this doesn't apply to that pink and blue blog with hundreds of pictures of the owner you came across the other day! But as with most media, you'd need to sift through the pile to find the gems, and gems there were aplenty this year.

Mp3 players. iPod, iPod, iPod. Must there be, or is there even, anything else?

There are PODcasts, or audible, downloadable blogposts you can subscribe to and receive automatically from the Net. It's also New Oxford American Dictionary's 'Word of the Year.'

There are iPOD fashion accessories from the likes of Gucci and Fendi to garb both your iPod and yourself. There are iPOD cars—actually BMWs with kits ready to plug your iPods in.

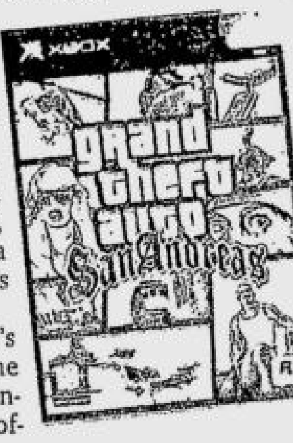
Gaming. The jury's still out, but even experts concede that "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" rocked everyone's boat, and with its outstanding musical array featuring the likes of early Ice Cube, Public Enemy, 2Pac and Cypress Hill (the game is set in the early 1990s), I mean that literally as well.

Controversy surrounding the games' excessive violence and mature content is a sign that people, mainly parents, need to take games seriously, at least as much as they do movies. In any case, GTA San Andreas is a terrific gaming experience, controversy or no controversy. Play it, but please keep kids away from it.

Viruses and malware. Sony's Digital Rights Management (DRM) toolkit was designed to prevent people from pirating CDs. Instead, glitches in the design spawned a media and PR nightmare, with various groups threatening suit against the company.

The DRM toolkit, it turned out, surreptitiously installed software in your PC that prevented it from copying CDs. If that wasn't bad enough, it opened a backdoor that potentially allowed viruses in and even introduced incompatibility issues with computer CD players, DVD players and even car stereos.

Microsoft and Symantec have called it a backdoor Trojan virus, and one distributed by a company of Sony's stature at that.



Internet. Google's lofty goal of indexing the world's information continued on its merry, profitable way throughout 2005 with its various offerings. There's "Desktop" to index your PC's inner works, "Talk" to connect via voice throughout the Internet, "Earth" to see where anyone is on the planet, "Books" to search for published texts, "Video" to upload videos, "Images" to search for pictures, and "Maps" for the same.

For all these and more, Google is certainly the newsmaker of the year.

APPLE'S iPod—the most-coveted gadget of the year

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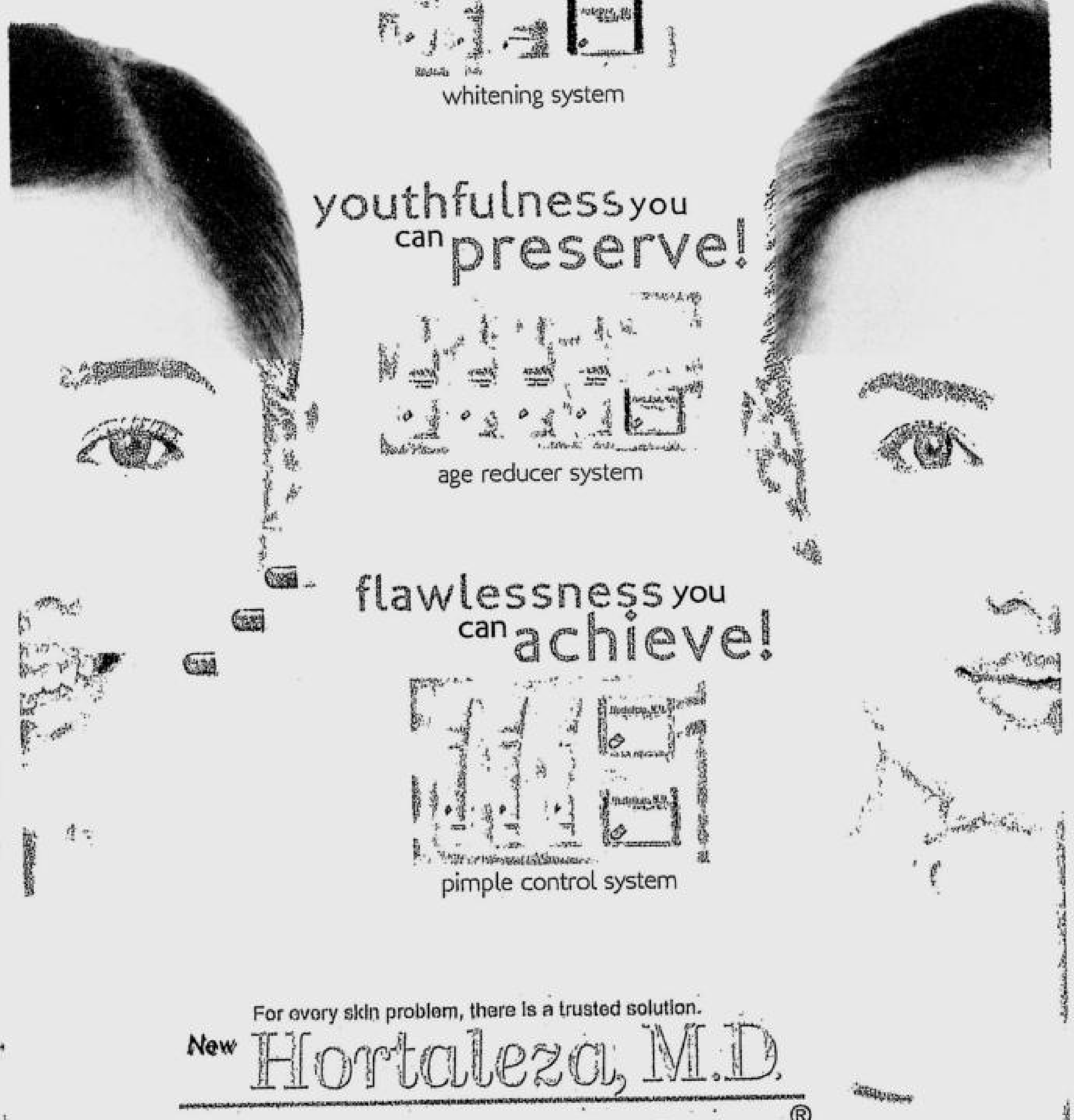

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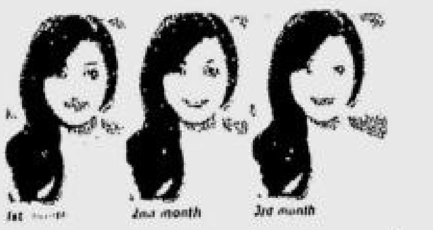

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See flyers for details Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3082. Series of 2005.

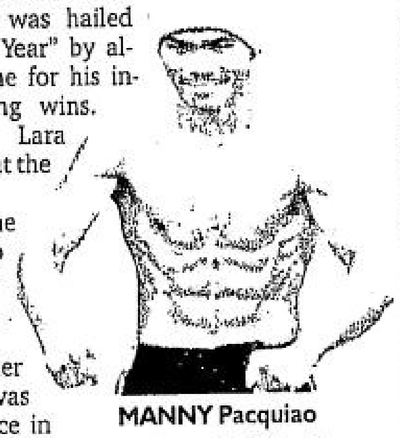
DARNA! Angel Locsin shone this year.

Faces we like

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

2005 WILL BE VERY MEMORABLE for Filipinos for a number of reasons.

First, it's the year when more homegrown talents made it big abroad. Manny Pacquiao was hailed "Man of the Year" by almost everyone for his inspiring boxing wins. Precious Lara Quigaman put the Philippines back on the beauty map when she won Miss International. Bag designer Bea Valdes was featured twice in fashion bible Vogue. Monique Lhuillier became synonymous with celebrity gowns.



MANNY Pacquiao

Zaldy Goco was named head designer for Gwen Stefani's bag and clothing line L.A.M.B. Mutya Bueno returned to the music scene together with the rest of Sugababes. And part-Filipino Nicole of The Pussycat Dolls blasted into the airwaves.

NEIL Gaiman

Second, many international celebrities visited this part of the world. Angsty Avril Lavigne had a concert in the country with the band Simple Plan doing the front act. Good Charlotte performed in July. Trendy pianist Maxim returned this month.

"American Idol" hottie Constantine Maroulis wowed mallrats at the Ayala malls in November. Even fantasy/science fiction author Neil Gaiman dropped by last July to sign copies of his books, and drew a big, rapturous crowd.

"Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" stars Thom Filicia and Kyan Douglas were also planed in by the Ayalas to hold a makeover mission and give grooming and interior design talks. Needless to say, they were a hit.

Local boob-tube biggies include impressive debuting programs from GMA 7 such as "Dar-

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